BLACKWOOD'S
MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 1960

NUMBER 1740 – VOLUME 288

SOLDIERING IN THE 'SIXTIES

BY J. G. R. A.

NOT long ago, I was dining at a country house in the north of England and found myself sitting next to a well-known local industrialist. He is in his late fifties, has travelled widely and obviously takes a keen interest in public affairs. "So you're a soldier," he said. "I see that the Army Estimates are up again this year; what do we taxpayers get from all this money? What does the Army *do* now? Do we really need an army at all in these days of H bombers and inter-continental rockets? Surely, all we want is a sort of armed gendarmerie to reinforce our colonial police forces if things look like getting out of hand; just think of how much money this would save! I think the trouble with you chaps is that you are living in the past, absorbed in your own little customs and traditions, and right out of touch with the real problems of today."

Many thinking people are asking questions of this sort. It is only possible to find reasonable answers if we understand the main factors affecting the place of the Army in our present society. We must therefore consider what tasks the Army has been given within the framework of the Government's Defence Policy, how the Army has organised itself to carry out these tasks, and what are the main problems that it faces now and in the future.

The Government's Defence Policy has four main aims. Briefly and in order of priority, these are: firstly, to deter global war; secondly, to maintain and improve our position in the Cold War; thirdly, to win a limited war if one should break out ; and, lastly, to survive global war if this should come. Note the priorities here and, especially, the distinction drawn between deterring global war, which is first priority, and fighting it, which comes last. In pursuit of these aims, we have entered into a number of regional defence treaties, each involving us in various political, financial and military obligations. The most important of these are with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (N.A.T.O.), the Central Treaty Organisation (C.E.N.T.O.—formerly the Baghdad Pact) and the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (S.E.A.T.O.). In addition, we have treaties with Malaya, Libya and a number of independent rulers in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf. Finally, and not least important, we have responsibilities for the external and internal defence of our remaining colonial territories and various moral and other imprecisely defined obligations towards our fellow members of the Commonwealth.

What, then, are the Army's tasks in helping to carry out this policy ? Probably the least understood of these tasks is the Army's role in deterring global war. The basis of the Western Deterrent is the United States Strategic Air Command and Royal Air Force Bomber Command, both equipped to deliver thermo-nuclear weapons by manned aircraft and by rocket. The validity of this deterrent depends entirely on its credibility to a potential enemy ; in other words, the potential enemy must believe that the weapons would be effective if we decided to use them, despite any action he could take; and he must also believe that, in certain circumstances, we would, in fact, use them, despite the consequences to ourselves. It is on this last point that the Army's role becomes apparent. The 'certain circumstances' under which we would use the strategic nuclear weapon must be credibly defined. From every point of view, moral, political and military, these circumstances can only be those in which the really vital interests of the powers actually possessing strategic nuclear weapons are subjected to full-scale attack by Russian or Chinese armed forces. We would not be justified in using these weapons to stop attacks by purely satellite forces, nor would we wish to do so. What then are our 'really vital interests'? More important, how does the potential enemy assess them? Self-interest being what it is, it would be surprising if he did not feel that our opinion of what constitutes our 'really vital interests' had been considerably narrowed down since he became able to deliver thermo-nuclear weapons against targets in the United States and Great Britain. He will expect our definition of these interests to continue to narrow as his strategic nuclear capability grows towards what he regards as sufficiency.

The dangers for us in this situation are threefold: firstly, that we may be faced with a threat of aggression which does not justify the use of strategic thermo-nuclear weapons, in the light of the consequences to our homelands, but which we cannot deal with by other means; secondly, that we may be presented with a sudden *fait accompli* in the form of a portion of allied territory taken over by Soviet or satellite forces before we can act at all; and thirdly, that the Soviet or Chinese leaders may misinterpret our own view of what constitutes our 'really vital interests.' To meet these dangers, we must raise the stakes by ensuring that our vital interests can only be threatened by open, full-scale attack by Soviet or Chinese armed forces in circumstances that their leaders believe will lead inevitably to our use of strategic thermo-nuclear weapons. To do this we need strong land forces in allied territory on the frontiers of the Soviet bloc, able to halt any satellite attack, prevent any *fait accompli* takeover of allied territory, and define the start of any full-scale Soviet or Chinese attack. In areas especially vital to the West, as in Western Europe, these land forces must be organised and equipped to contain the advance of Soviet forces, using conventional and tactical nuclear weapons, for sufficiently long for our strategic air forces to be launched and for their attacks to take effect. More important, these 'shield forces,' as they are called, must include substantial numbers of United States and British troops. It will thus be clear to our continental allies that their frontiers will be defended, and clear to the Soviet Union that any full-scale attack by them will involve us, and our strategic nuclear weapons, from the word 'go.'

We can now see that the Army plays an essential part in deterring global war. Our force of seven brigade groups in Western Germany is, of course, our most important contribution in this field and will absorb a high proportion of our small all-Regular Army. Other important contributions to the deterrent are made by smaller forces in Berlin and Hong Kong.

The Army's main task within the framework of our defence policy is to help maintain and improve our position in the Cold War. We may here be faced with every sort of subversive activity, ranging from demonstrations to ventilate local grievances to full-scale armed rebellion aimed at overthrowing the established government. The troubles may arise in one of our colonies or in a friendly independent territory with which we have treaty obligations to support the local ruler. The rioters or insurgents may often be Communist-inspired and supplied; if not, Communists will certainly attempt to exploit the situation in any way they can. As far as the Army is concerned, a number of principles are common to all situations of this type. The first is that the mere presence of British troops in the area may have a sufficiently steadying effect to prevent any trouble breaking out at all. There is no substitute for the soldier on the spot, who is seen by the local population and who knows the situation at first hand. The second is that, if troops are required they will be needed very quickly; unless the situation is very serious and foreign troops are likely to support the rebels, our own troops need only be lightly equipped. The third principle is that the closest co-operation and trust are necessary between the civil authorities, the police and the soldiers, particularly in the intelligence field. These operations are, in fact, controlled by committees of civil administrators, soldiers and policemen at each level, an unusual way of conducting military business but one that experience has shown us to be the best. Most of our overseas garrisons are deployed primarily in this Cold War role. They are in such places as Singapore, Kenya, the Arabian Peninsula, Cyprus, Malta, Libya, Gibraltar and the Carribean. In addition, a portion of our troops in Malaya is still assisting the Federation Army in the closing stages of the jungle campaign against the Communist terrorists. The main weapons of the Cold War are the radio stations, the pamphlets and the soap-boxes, but it is the soldier and his colleagues in the local police forces who must bear the burden when trouble begins.

The Army's third task is to fight, and win, a limited war if one should break out. This could range from actions to protect British lives and property against the armed forces of independent tribal rulers to a near full-scale war against Soviet or Chinese satellites, lavishly equipped with Soviet weapons and possibly stiffened by Soviet or Chinese 'volunteers.' Such wars might include the use, or threatened use, of tactical nuclear weapons and, except for very small actions, would probably be fought in co-operation with United States' forces. Whatever form such a war might take, we are almost certain to have to move the forces involved to the field of battle very quickly, and the longer this takes the more forces we are likely to need. Moreover, these forces will need more than the light equipment required in the Cold War role; for the enemy may well have large numbers of tanks and other heavy equipment. We therefore maintain in the Middle and Far East small Theatre Reserves acclimatised and ready to move within their Command at short notice. They are backed up by the main Strategic Reserve held centrally in the United Kingdom. Both local and central reserves are, of course, also available for Cold War tasks if necessary. Both require the means to get themselves and their essential equipment quickly to the scene of action.

The Army's fourth task is to help the nation to survive global war, should it come. We hope it will not, but we cannot ignore the possibility; for to do so would be to provide, by our unpreparedness, unnecessary temptation to our enemies. Clearly our forces in Germany and in the United Kingdom would be in the forefront of the battle. The former would have to resist the Soviet advance into Western Europe until our strategic and tactical air forces had done their work and our enemies had been halted by the destruction of their communications and administrative resources. To do this, our own forces must have ready before the outbreak of war sufficient and suitably dispersed stocks of ammunition, petrol and other supplies needed for the estimated duration of the battle. The bulk of our forces in the United Kingdom, including the Territorial Army, would be fully committed to civil-defence work on a gigantic scale. However remote this possibility may be, it must be faced; certainly in no other situation would bodies of organised and disciplined men be so badly needed.

We have now seen that the Army has a vital and little-understood task in helping to deter global war; that it plays a major role in the Cold War; that it must be prepared to fight a limited war, large or small, with or without tactical nuclear weapons, anywhere in the world; and finally that it must be prepared to help the nation to survive a global war if this should come. In these tasks, the Army works in close co-operation with our allies, particularly with our fellow members of N.A.T.O., C.E.N.T.O. and S.E.A.T.O., and with our friends in the Commonwealth. Let us now examine some of the problems which face the Army in carrying out these tasks.

The basic organisational problem facing any Army is what the soldier calls the balance of arms—that is, the achievement at each level of the right proportion of tanks, armoured cars, artillery (conventional and nuclear), engineers, signals, infantry and the various administrative services. Probably the most important and most difficult balance to get right is that between tanks and infantry. This depends on three main factors. The first is the type of country over which the battle is to be fought. If the country is very 'close' and the manœuvre and movement of tanks much restricted, as in mountains or jungle, we need proportionately fewer tanks and more infantry; whereas in open desert country, we need more tanks and fewer infantry. The second factor is the nature of the enemy, for this will strongly influence the type of battle to be fought. The third factor is the type of battle—offensive or defensive, mobile or static, nuclear or conventional. Broadly speaking, because tanks can fight more effectively in a fluid battle and have a considerable measure of protection against nuclear attack, we need a higher proportion of tanks in a mobile, nuclear battle than we do in a static conventional one. Conversely, in a static, conventional battle, we need more infantry. Similarly, in a mobile nuclear battle we need, relatively speaking, a lot of nuclear artillery but few conventional pieces, whereas, in a static conventional battle we need a great deal of conventional artillery and no nuclear weapons unless, in self-defence, we need to threaten to use them.

We have attempted to solve this

problem by organising the bulk of the Army into one standard type of formation which is considered to be reasonably suitable for most of its tasks. This solution has the great merit of simplicity at a time when the Army is undergoing a major reorganisation into a small all-regular force, and, in any case, for most limited war tasks, the proportion of arms is about right. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses. In Western Germany, our shield forces are relatively weak in tanks compared with the Soviet forces in Eastern Germany. Yet for Cold War tasks outside Europe the standard formation tends to have too much heavy equipment seldom required in this role and which is, above all, very difficult to move to the scene of trouble.

It is no good having forces, however well-organised they may be, unless they can get to the battlefield in time and out-manœuvre the enemy. Let us now consider these two aspects of mobility. The first is governed by three factors, the need for speed, the problem of heavy equipment, and the air/sea barrier across the Middle East. Obviously, as much as possible of our strategic reserve forces and their equipment must be air-portable, and we must have sufficient suitable aircraft to move them across the world in a reasonable time. We also need at or near the destination suitable airfields that are either in friendly hands or can be seized by parachutists or by Royal Marines landed by helicopter from the Commando Carrier. The recent and continuing expansion of Royal Air Force Transport Command has been enthusiastically welcomed by all soldiers and has enormously increased the value of our strategic reserve forces. Unfortunately this does not entirely solve the problem. It would be unreasonable to expect to have sufficient aircraft to move a substantial part of the Strategic Reserve's equipment and vehicles from, say, the United Kingdom to the Far East. We therefore have to stockpile certain heavy equipment, especially vehicles, at strategic places and, because we cannot now guarantee the use of the Suez Canal and the adjacent air routes during all emergencies, we must have such stockpiles on each side of this possible barrier. These are very expensive from the point of view of the storage accommodation they need and the men required to maintain the equipment in them, so the number we can afford to keep is strictly limited. This means that we must assume that if it becomes necessary to use equipment from a stockpile it will have to be moved some distance across the sea to the place where it is needed. Furthermore, some equipment, notably medium and heavy tanks, cannot be made air-portable and so must be moved by sea, either from the United Kingdom or from garrisons or stockpiles abroad. There are very few ports in the Middle and Far East that have cranes large enough to lift a tank from a ship's hold and even fewer where such ships can be discharged without the use of lighters.

Very few British merchant ships have derricks that can lift a tank. We therefore need a few fast assault ships to operate with the Commando Carrier and discharge tanks and other urgently-needed heavy vehicles directly on to a beach or the quay-side of a small fishing-harbour, and link up with troops landed by transport aircraft or by helicopters from the Carrier. Such an arrangement is essential in the early stages of an operation until we have the use of a port where ordinary cargo-ships can discharge the follow-up forces and their equipment. We have no suitable assault ships at present; for the few survivors of our war-time fleet of assault ships are all obsolete and have a speed of only eight knots. We can thus say that, while we are very well equipped to intervene swiftly with light forces landing by parachute, directly from aircraft or by helicopter from the Commando Carrier, we lack the ability to do so effectively and quickly against an enemy equipped with numbers of tanks and other heavy equipment. Sea transport is, in fact, complementary to air transport and it is in the former that we are now deficient.

On the battlefield, armies are tending to become smaller, more dispersed and more mobile, both on and off the ground. For nuclear war in Europe, every infantryman now needs the protection and mobility of an armoured personnel carrier; without it, he can either be protected in a hole in the ground or mobile (on his feet), but not both; he certainly cannot keep up with the tanks with which he must be if both are to fight effectively. All infantrymen of the Soviet forces in Germany have vehicles of this type but only a small number of our own have them. They are expensive, but, in due course, we hope to have sufficient; we certainly need them. More and more soldiers are now taking to the air in a variety of short-range aircraft, which can operate from small fields or unprepared strips right in the battle area. The United States' Army has thousands of its own 'battlefield' aircraft, both fixed-wing and helicopters, for reconnaissance, liaison and the movement of troops and supplies about the battle area. The French Army also uses large numbers of such aircraft, particularly helicopters, in Algeria. We now have our own light aircraft and helicopters, but on a much smaller scale. Broadly speaking, they are restricted to those carrying up to two or three passengers and needed for reconnaissance and light liaison duties. Heavier battlefield aircraft and helicopters for the movement of troops and supplies are to be provided by the Royal Air Force, and one of the tasks of the recently reformed No. 38 Group is to study and evolve new techniques for their use. But as this decision has only fairly recently been made, few of these heavier battlefield aircraft are, as yet, available and we are certainly behind both the Americans and French in this respect.

Having considered some of the problems of organisation and mobility, let us now discuss some of the problems of equipping our Army with suitable weapons. This is not a subject about which we can be in any way complacent or parsimonious. Soviet Russia devotes enormous resources to developing and producing weapons of war, most of which are highly efficient equipments of the very latest design. As new equipment replaces obsolescent in the Soviet Army, the old equipment is passed over to satellite and friendly 'neutral' nations. Such equipment is now found in many parts of the world and, although it may not be a match for the best of ours, it is not to be despised. Moreover, if it suited her ends, there is no reason why Soviet Russia should not hand over the latest versions of some equipment to a friendly 'neutral' state, with or without 'volunteers' to operate it. It is therefore imperative that we should not lag behind in this development race.

We are living in an age of tremendous technological progress. An important policy decision made now in the present state of human knowledge may be completely outdated in two years' time by some unexpected technical break-through; Blue Streak is an example of this. It takes about ten years from the time a completely new and complicated equipment is envisaged to the time it is issued to the troops in quantity. We must therefore try and foresee the conditions of warfare ten years ahead. This crystal-gazing is complicated by the increasing extent to which, in all walks of life, the technician and scientist are becoming incomprehensible to the layman owing to the intense and continuous specialisation now required in scientific development. This barrier must somehow be broken down if the general staff officer, representing the user, is to be able to frame the requirements for a new equipment in the full light of what may be technically feasible by the time it is produced. This, in turn, must be related to the development of organisation and tactics, so that, by the time the new equipment arrives, the Army has developed suitable techniques to make the best possible use of it. The whole problem of development is further complicated by the variety of tasks facing the Army. For example, there is the need for as much as possible of our equipment to be air-portable. An armoured personnel carrier is required primarily for nuclear war in Europe, for which role it clearly need not be air-portable; but we may want some of these vehicles for limited war outside Europe and we may wish to fly them to the scene of action. Do we ask for the vehicle to be air-portable and accept the serious limitations in size, weight and armour protection this will involve?

Another example is the need to develop nuclear and conventional weapons side by side, which greatly adds to the expense of equipping the Army. The burden of all this development on a country such as ours is enormous, and considerable efforts are being made towards achieving greater interdependence among our allies in this field. As an example, we are getting the new Italian 105-mm. howitzer and the Americans have adopted our 105-mm. tank gun. It should, nevertheless, be realised that interdependence, to be of any real value, must be complete; for to produce in this country a complicated equipment such as a vehicle designed abroad would involve an almost complete redesign of the whole equipment and would thus save very little time and expense. At present, not even screw-threads are internationally standardised!

Still far more important than weapons and equipment are the men behind them. How is the Army facing up to its new recruiting and training problems after over twenty years' conscription? Publicity and pay are rather outside our control; for they are largely dependent on the amount of public money we are allowed to spend on them. Nevertheless, much valuable work has been done in building up a sound recruiting organisation throughout the country. We have done and are still doing a very great deal to make the soldier's conditions of service more attractive. Big strides are at last being made in rebuilding the obsolete barrack accommodation in this country and in meeting the extra demand for married quarters required for an increasing number of married regular soldiers (soldiers tend to marry younger these days, in common with most civilians!). The standard of this new accommodation is such as would have seemed inconceivable even ten years ago. Abroad the problem is not so easy, because it is difficult to forecast in these changing times how big a garrison will be required and for how long. Clearly it would be a disgraceful waste of public money to build permanent accommodation unless there was a reasonable assurance that it would be needed for a period sufficient to justify the expense. In several places where such an assurance cannot be given and where troops are still required to remain, good-quality hutted accommodation, very different from the Nissen hut of World War II, is being used, which can be dismantled for re-use elsewhere when no longer required.

With the closing down of the large training units needed during National Service, much more time can be spent on the training of the regular soldier, not only in the skills of his Army trade but also in his basic character-training as a soldier. Much more emphasis is now given to developing his qualities of initiative and self-reliance by various forms of adventure training. Soldiers in small parties from one unit alone in Germany have travelled through most of Western Europe from Austria to Scandinavia in recent months on training of this kind. With the ending of National Service there is a new attitude to manpower economy and, whenever possible, soldiers in routine administrative and housekeeping jobs in this country are being replaced by civilians and returned to far more useful and interesting work with their regiments.

There are undoubtedly still some problems to be solved in training units of the Strategic Reserve in this country, where training areas are inevitably so restricted. But the build-up of Royal Air Force Transport Command opens the way to much more training abroad. Exercises of the type recently held in which a whole brigade was flown to Libya are of the greatest value and, naturally, extremely popular.

In spite of all these measures, recruiting for all three Services has recently fallen off. This is a most serious matter and we must redouble our efforts if we are to get sufficient suitable men to enable us to discharge our responsibilities effectively. The reasons for this setback are difficult to assess; some, such as the very high level of civilian employment, are outside our control. Whatever they are, the problem is a national one and deserves the support of all sections of the community. No one wants a return of National Service in any form, least of all the professional soldier.

Officer recruiting and training of course present their own special problems. During the period immediately after the 'Sandys Axe' recruiting suffered a serious setback, as was only to be expected. But the new terms of service whereby we can leave with a small pension at 37 when still young enough to get another job, or stay on until 55, have made a tremendous difference to our prospects. The Sandhurst Scholarship Scheme is encouraging keen competition and is attracting boys of the highest calibre; many serving officers are now again encouraging their sons to follow their footsteps; and Sandhurst itself is filling up fast. Many of us hope that it will soon be possible to raise the academic standard required for entry and thus appeal more to the best brains we need to face our very complicated and fascinating problems in the future.

What does the future look like? Perhaps, with growing strategic nuclear parity between the great powers, the danger of global war may decrease, but, as it does so, limited war, with or without tactical nuclear weapons, may become more likely. Cold War is very likely to continue. A small, semi-permanent battle group of all arms, tailored to the task in hand, may become the basic unit in the Army; if this happens, it may be necessary to make some quite drastic changes to our present regimental system. We certainly hope for increased mobility on the ground, by air and by sea, and some of our vehicles may even be able to fly short distances over woods, rivers or other obstacles. Equipment generally will be lighter and more of it will be air-portable. Nuclear weapons are likely to become smaller and more selective, and we shall have more of them and more means of delivering them, both by gun and rocket. Facilities for reconnaissance and night-fighting will be much improved and much more use will be made of radar and infra-red devices for this work. And, finally, lighter, more efficient and more secure signals-equipment will lead to new and more efficient methods of staff work. Altogether this is a fascinating but rather awe-inspiring prospect ; we shall certainly need high-grade soldiers to make the best use of all these developments.

We live in an Age of Change. The Army has clear and widely-differing tasks and responsibilities in many parts of the world, including an essential contribution to the maintenance of the deterrent to global war which is the first aim of our defence policy. Some of these responsibilities may grow if, as seems possible, the threat of limited war increases. There are many interesting problems to be solved and we are at the threshold of enormous technical progress which we must direct wisely if we are not to be left at the post. I must say I find it all most stimulating !

SKYDIVING

BY JOHN ALLEN

IT was quite by chance that I met Brodie Harrel, president of the Midnight Sun Skydivers. He was working in the Bureau of Land Management Forestry office on the outskirts of Fairbanks, Alaska, when I went in to sign up to fight the forest fires. In 1956 Brodie had played host for two nights to a party of British Army mountaineers led by Jimmy Mills. They had been climbing Mount McKinley. I had known Jimmy in Egypt in 1953 when we were both in the Parachute Brigade and, so, as the saying goes, 'we got talking,' Brodie and I. One thing led to another and, before I knew what I was saying, I had agreed to go jumping with him at the first opportunity. Two days later I was called out on the Tok-Kan fire and spent forty-six days in the bush. In the end I was in the wilds for practically the whole summer, and did not get a chance to meet Brodie again until the very beginning of September. Then I had a few days to kill in Fairbanks, and the idea of going jumping appealed to me once more. But this was to be parachuting with a difference. No Army-style line-ups, comfortable seats in large aeroplanes, static lines and well-marked dropping-zones. This was to be skydiving, free-fall parachuting, something I had longed to do for many years.

Man has always wanted to fly, and the legend of Icarus was almost certainly based on an early failure to imitate the birds. Some great men such as da Vinci and Bacon, and others not so well known, like Fleyden and da Lanca, have drawn out on paper flying-machines, aerial boats, and propeller-driven balloons. Lilienthal was the first to introduce the idea of curving the lifting or supporting surfaces, and he did not kill himself until he had made more than two thousand safe glides. When the Wright Brothers harnessed the engine to a flying-machine, and Santos-Dumont had flown two hundred and fifty yards in twenty-one seconds, the air age had arrived, and with it a widespread need for parachutes. Da Vinci's notebooks contain parachute-drawings, and another pioneer inventor, Sebastien Lenormand, is said to have obtained his idea from the common jellyfish. In 1785 Blanchard dropped a dog from a balloon, and in 1793 he himself broke a leg in a parachute landing. Another Frenchman, Garnerin, gave exhibitions of jumping from balloons in France and England in 1802 from heights up to eight thousand feet. Towards the end of the First World

War pilots were escaping from their planes by parachute, and its efficiency became a commonplace when parachute regiments were formed to conduct a specialised form of air-to-ground offensive in the Second World War. After 1945 clubs sprang up in France, Russia and the Balkan countries to practise parachuting.

The sport of skydiving, as it is now called, is young in America and even younger in England; but it is growing fast. Skydiving is not a daredevil act to see how long a man can fall free before he pulls the ripcord. It is a sport with rules and regulations, with a beginning, a middle and an end. It has various manœuvres to be completed in the air, and these require much practice. One cannot say too strongly that skydiving is a safe sport, not a daredevil crowd-thriller.

In Alaska there are two flourishing clubs which combine the sport of skydiving with first-aid drops into inaccessible places. My parachuting experience before going to Alaska had been limited to eighteen jumps with the Parachute Regiment, all 'static line' jumps. For these the parachute is attached to a length of webbing, the static line, which is hooked to a wire in the aeroplane. All the parachutist has to do is to jump out: his parachute opens automatically, leaving the static line behind.

The day Brodie and I settled on to skydive was warm, and there was only a mild three- or four-knot breeze blowing up the slow-moving, muddy Chena River. Nothing to worry about here. We drove down the track by the railway-sidings to the small grass field and stopped by one of the hangars. "That's her." Brodie nodded towards a brightly-painted yellow Cessna 180 with red lines. We put our two backpacks on the grass verge and the two smaller spare 'chutes beside them. I did a couple of practice rolls on the hard earth and found that I had not forgotten everything I had learned. Brodie went off, and came back with the pilot to check over the plane. He beckoned me over and sat on the floor beside the pilot, with his legs hanging over the side. "It's all you have to do," he said with a grin. "Just sit here and topple right out." He jumped to the ground and I sat with my feet over the side and rocked myself off. "Of course, there'll be a bit of wind, but that's all there is to it," he said approvingly, as I rolled easily forward over the side of the plane. We walked back to our parachutes and put them on. Brodie helped me into the unfamiliar harness and hooked the spare 'chute onto the two 'D' rings on my chest. It was the first time I had worn a spare, for in the British Army the use of a reserve is a recent innovation.

The breeze, which was barely noticeable as we crossed the Chena, had faded completely, and the sun seemed to have the heat of mid-July in it as the dusty grass absorbed its glare. A mechanic sitting on an ice-chest full of Coca-Cola was sucking the remains of a drink from a bottle. He shook his head. "Crazy," he said. "You guys must be crazy."

At this stage I was inclined to agree with him; but on these occasions the upper lip inevitably stiffens, and I managed a rather hearty, "Jolly good day for jumping." This produced a loud guffaw and a few choice remarks about the mad English, which did not help my waning confidence. Why was I doing it, anyway? The whole thing was senseless. At that point the engine of the Cessna shattered the still air and a funnel of dust rose up. Brodie came over with a helmet he had borrowed from the local high-school football team, and I put it on and fiddled with the strap. I could feel my hands shaking, and the damned strap would not go through the buckle. Brodie of course was ready before I had put the helmet to my head. He did up the buckle for me and I contrived a grin.

"Let's go," he said. My legs grew heavier and heavier as we approached the vibrating plane, my stomach did a loop all by itself, and all the time the plane was getting nearer and nearer. But before I knew what was happening I was being helped in and we were taxying down to the west end of the field. In the shade of the pines we turned and stopped, the plane pulsating, straining against the brakes. For a fleeting second I contemplated jumping out on to the dear earth, but I vaguely remembered that when I was in the Army this was just what I had wanted to do before *every* jump. I had always turned round to the men, stuck up my thumb and yelled something profane or asinine, like, "Here we go!" and there had always been a few acknowledging smiles. So I turned to Brodie and shouted, "This is it, I guess!" "You bet," he replied, and we were thrown back as the pilot released the brakes and the plane surged forward. Faster, faster, faster over the ground we bumped, and I knew now that there was no getting out. The pilot lifted the Cessna up and above the trees and swung her round in a wide climbing arc over Fairbanks.

I fingered my chinstrap nervously, pulled it a little tighter, and managed a sickly smile at Brodie who was glancing through the window. He smiled back and we made ourselves as comfortable as we could for the few remaining minutes. On the ground we had discussed how the descent should be made. This was the plan: the plane would fly the length of Cramer's field and over the middle of it. As we approached the first hedge I would slip my legs over the side and sit on the floor, holding onto the door-jambs. Brodie would be looking over my shoulder, and when he yelled 'Go' all I had to do was to let go and roll forward out of the door, wait half a second, then very firmly with my right hand pull the handle of the ripcord which was over on the left of my chest.

We had laughed and joked about it on the ground. As we circled Fairbanks at one thousand, then fifteen hundred feet, it was no longer a laughing matter. Brodie looked out of the side of the plane and yelled, "There's the field." I nodded dumbly. When the pilot reached the required three thousand feet he set his course for the run-in. He nodded over his shoulder at Brodie as the field came under us. Brodie leaned over the side, and as the first boundary hedge passed directly beneath us he pulled me forward by the shoulder and gave me an encouraging nod. I slithered forward over the floor, now too frightened to think. I sat down on the floor, next to the pilot, with my legs facing the open door, and forced myself forward. It seemed to be blowing a gale, and as I pushed my legs out and over the side I was practically swept away. I clutched at the sides of the door and looked down at the now alien earth so far away. I remembered thinking that this was sheer madness. I saw Brodie over my right shoulder, leaning out, and suddenly he turned and yelled in my ear, "Okay—GO!"

I put my head down and rolled off the edge of the little plane with my eyes tight shut. The wind whipped me away. I remember thinking quickly that my eyes were closed and that I had better open them. When I did so I saw that my feet were together and pointing at the tail of the plane as it continued on over the field. My body turned and rolled in the air and my feet seemed to describe a slow circle round the disappearing tail of the Cessna. I looked down at the ripcord ring and grasped it firmly, and gave it the biggest tug I could muster.

The canopy fluttered out, billowed, breathed and mushroomed, and I looked up and grinned. "My first free fall," I said out loud. I put the ripcord on my wrist and looked up at the canopy, each panel filling out, alternately red and white. The field was large and I pulled on the lift-webs to guide myself as near as I could to the waiting car on the road. Remembering the instructors' old cry of 'feet and knees together,' I locked my legs, and before I had quite realised it I was bumped hard, but safely, on the ground.

I took off my harness and patted the ground; then rolled up the parachute and strode triumphantly off the field to receive the congratulations of the two fellows with the car. The Cessna came over the field again on the same track, but higher in the sky. We could see Brodie poised in the open door, his legs driven towards the tail by the wind. Then he rolled out and spread his arms and legs. This spread-eagle effect pulled him up into a stable position and he fell straight for ten seconds before his right hand flashed across his chest and the parachute blossomed out above him. It was the first free fall I had ever seen and I was fascinated. When Brodie joined us by the car he said it was nothing, and that one day we would go up to twelve thousand feet and do a forty-second or even a sixty-second delay jump, with turns and figure-eights, perhaps trying to pass a baton between us. "That's really skydiving," he said.

I was very happy that night in Tommy's Elbow Room on Second Avenue, where we went in celebration. Every first-timer stands a round of drinks and must himself have a Flaming Mamie, a liqueur-glass brimful of vodka, which is lighted. I had a large beard and did not want this to suffer the degradation of burning or even singeing, so I wiped my moustaches and carefully brushed the beard away from my mouth with a wet bar-towel as Tommy set the drink before me. I kept the towel by my left hand as he lit the vodka with a blow-torch. I am sure he must be the only bar-tender in the world to have a blow-torch on hand to 'flambeau' a customer's liqueur. The vodka flickered and then caught, burning with a quiet, light-mauve flame. This was almost worse than sky-diving; but I grasped the glass firmly, took a deep breath, opened my mouth as wide as I could, and all but swallowed the glass too.

After our good start the weather turned nasty for a few days, but on the first bright morning I telephoned to Brodie and we arranged to jump that afternoon. We were to go out one after the other from three thousand five hundred feet, and I was to try the sky-diving technique. I had the same fears, the same empty feeling in the pit of my stomach, the same wish to jump out of the plane as it bumped its way slowly over the rough grass. Paper and straw blew uncontrollably about in the back as the pilot pulled the small Cessna over the trees at the end of the airstrip. There was a slight wind this time. I was going to jump out over the farm buildings that lay scattered along one side of the field; this would give Brodie ample room for his descent on the same run.

We climbed higher and higher as we circled Fairbanks. The old boom town, which first tasted the lust for gold in 1902 and has never forgotten it, looked small, stretching unequally on either side of the dirty Chena. We levelled out at three-and-a-half thousand and the pilot started his run-in. I squatted on the floor of the plane and pushed my legs out. They were immediately seized by the wind and swept tailwards, but this time I was prepared for it and clung to the door jambs tightly. Brodie made his way to my right, and now our legs were tugged sideways in unison. I shall always remember thinking of us as two little boys, sitting on a bridge with our legs swinging madly. I did not dwell on that thought long, because now I could see the farm buildings only three or four hundred yards ahead and below. I eased myself forward, looked over my knees, and waited for the buildings to come directly underneath. As they did so I ducked my head and, keeping my eyes open this time, rolled forward, at once spreading my arms wide, arching my back, raising my head again and spread-eagling my legs. I seemed to turn a little on my right side, but then straightened up and stayed that way, falling flat, looking straight downwards at the farmyard.

I did not notice whether or not I was holding my breath. The wind buffeted my hands and arms slightly and I found I could not keep them quite still. They seemed to flap up and down jerkily, but only for a matter of inches. I cannot remember the wind in my face at all, and yet after ten seconds of the fall I must have been travelling at about a hundred and twenty miles an hour. This feeling of falling is strange; to be sure, you are falling fast, but you are not plummeting down in a hopeless uncontrollable drop. You seem to be, in some way, in control of your descent. Yet I had a sense of freedom in diving through the sky such as I had never experienced before. I felt that I now knew why the birds sing so happily.

I watched the farmyard with interest and saw cows and a cart or two quite clearly before I pulled the ripcord and my red-and-white canopy mushroomed out. I tugged hard and long at the lift-webs to steer myself away from the buildings, and landed near the road again. Brodie came down a hundred yards from me, and together we walked to the road. We were in high spirits, exhilarated by that sense of accomplishment which comes with success. And this was only the start. I was just beginning to learn the thrill of skydiving.

Next day I left and started on my journey back east—with my blood up to learn more of the technique of this wide-open and freedom-giving sport. I was armed with the address of the captain of the American Parachute Team, Jacques Istel, the man behind the drive to popularise skydiving in the United States. The main centre of skydiving in the east of America is now at Orange, Massachusetts, but then it was at Goodhill Farm, near Woodbury in Connecticut. Mr Pond, the owner of the farm, had a Cessna, a number of parachutes, and two sons and one daughter-in-law who were and still are skydivers in their own right. One son was a member of the United States team which went to Russia for the championships in 1958.

I went to Goodhill on the first Saturday as we had arranged by letter and telephone. When I joined Istel he was already surrounded by a dozen university students from Harvard, Princeton and Yale. My second-hand parachute, which I had been given and then used in Fairbanks, was not up to the standard of Istel's new and excellent blank-gore parachutes, and very kindly he lent me one of his own. Although the descent I made that day was only a 'jump and pull' from twenty-two hundred feet, I immediately realised the superior qualities of the blank-gores over my ex-Army T-10.

In Alaska the whole set-up for parachuting was nonchalant and casual, a care-free (though not careless) affair. In New England it was different. Istel, very properly, controlled the skydiving organisation. It was he who showed us the refinements of the blank-gore parachute. It was he who 'passed' us novices into the next stage of free-falling. In fact, it was Istel who *taught* us how to enjoy and make the most of our skydiving. His technique for jumping out was quite different from that we had used in Alaska, and it is this technique that is now the recognised, if not the official way of leaving any small aircraft. Two Cessnas were used for jumping. One was fitted with a wooden step which stuck out sideways from the underside of the fuselage. On the run-in at the required height, the jumper swung himself out on this step, facing forward. Holding on tightly to the angled wing-strut, he could watch the ground very closely for his mark, which he had carefully selected beforehand. When it came directly beneath him, he spread-eagled his legs backwards and up, and arched his back at the same time. The wind would tear his hands off the strut, and he would be in a stabilised skydiving position before actually starting the descent. At least that is what should happen in theory. But in many of my descents I found that I had a tendency to roll over on to my right side and cartwheel slowly through the air; and this was only corrected after someone who was watching me carefully from the plane saw that when I jumped my arms were never truly level and that my right hand always dropped slightly.

The second Cessna was not fitted with a board outside, so the jumper placed his right boot on the landing-wheel (of course with the brake on), and his left boot on the foot-rest. The wheel was only slightly lower than the foot-rest, but the uneven placing of the feet did not affect the jumper or his position once he had left the aeroplane.

It was while jumping at Goodhill that I really began to learn about skydiving and its intricacies. A number of us had been doing five to ten-second 'delays' and were beginning to be very confident, getting that know-all air, and eager to go on to the longer delays where stop-watches and altimeters have to be used. For it is only in a twenty, thirty or sixty-second delay that the true art of skydiving can be practised, when the jumper has time to complete his figure-eight, or whatever exercise he is carrying out, before pulling his ripcord.

One fine Sunday afternoon Istel and the second-string in the American team, Lew Sanborn, gave a demonstration jump from twelve thousand feet, and this, more than anything, whetted my appetite for more. A comparatively small number of people in the world have been that height in a light aeroplane, and very few with the intention of jumping out. Istel and Sanborn had discussed their timed criss-cross pattern through the sky. Each had a canister attached to one foot, which produced a trail of coloured smoke. Those of us on the ground watched enviously as the yellow-and-black-lined Cessna took off into a cloudless sky with the two jumpers on board, both clad in white overalls and helmets, goggles and leather gloves. To their spare 'chutes, clipped to their chests, were attached the all-important stop-watches and altimeters. The small plane climbed steadily in circles for almost half an hour. For us, sitting on the grass in front of the hangar, the sun radiated summer heat on this breezeless autumn day, but we all knew that for the two jumpers and the pilot in the aeroplane it must have been cold and very windy, for the door had been removed before take-off. As the plane laboured higher and higher we on the ground knew what was going on in the small cabin. Neither of the parachutists would be saying a word, for the wind whips away all meaningful sound; and both would be rubbing their hands and feeling thankful for the warmth of their gloves. At ten thousand feet the countryside around Goodhill would lose its individual character and their world would be a panoramic view that took in the neighbouring states of New York and Massachusetts. One thing that would remain clearly under their gaze was the small white cross, the now tiny white cross, on the dropping-zone, looking from twelve thousand feet like a pin-head. The pilot levelled out, and I guessed that he would be shouting over his shoulder that he was starting a long run-in. This would give the two experts plenty of time to decide on their exit, for the wind changes considerably in twelve thousand feet. In my mind I was up there with them in the plane. They nodded to each other, and Sanborn muttered an unheard remark into his chin-strap. He clambered out on the step, holding on tightly to the strut, and looked down and ahead of him. He glanced at Istel, who had slithered forward to the open door, and shrugged his shoulders as if to say, 'It's so damned far up anyway, what's a couple of seconds' difference going to make?' He looked down again, and then thrust his head towards the cabin where Istel was crouching ready to follow him into the sky, "Five," he yelled, signifying that he was going to jump in five seconds' time. Istel nodded and, counting off the seconds, readied himself for his spring. He saw Sanborn poised on the step, and then suddenly, after the five seconds, he was no longer there but diving through the sky. Istel launched himself after Sanborn, and he could see Sanborn stabilised now and waiting so that they could start their manœuvring together, one above the other. Istel moved his arms slowly and cautiously forward, for no movement can be hurried in sky-diving. And now, together, they began a series of sweeps out and back again, criss-crossing as they plummeted through the sky. They looked with concentration at the second-hands on their watches, timing each curve in the symmetrical pattern. The blue and red smoke twisted and spiralled in continuous streams behind them, marking the paths of their fall through the air. So accurate was the smoke-pattern woven by these diving men that it was as if some puppet-master was controlling them on unseen strings. They turned outwards once more, and then two canopies trailed simultaneously skywards, mushroomed, and blossomed to their perfect shape. Istel and Sanborn were two thousand feet up. There was a quiet, dazzled "Ah!" from us, like the first, soft, hopeful "*Olé!*" from the crowd watching a bullfight. Then we clapped furiously as the two men, expertly working the rigging-lines, landed, one fourteen yards and the other twenty-two yards from the white cross. It was an exceptional performance from that great height, even for such experienced skydivers.

I could not help thinking afterwards of the thrill this fine spectacle would have given the old pioneer, Garnerin, had he been able to watch. In the early part of the nineteenth century he had no perfectly-balanced nylon canopies, but gave his demonstrations with a crude twenty-three-foot canvas canopy shaped like an umbrella and finished off at the top with a ten-inch wooden disc with a hole in it. Today, sport-parachutes have twenty-eight panels or gores, each a foot wide at the base. Each gore is made of three panels, running diagonally, so that a tear can only affect one third of one gore and the performance of the parachute is almost unchanged. In a blank-gore parachute, one panel is left out. The gap can be closed by pulling gently down on a side rigging-line, and this makes the parachute spin smoothly to left or right, as desired.

Some days afterwards we had a 'jump-and-pull' competition, and from a little over two thousand feet I managed to land within seventy yards of the cross. Not very good. Later I did three more jumps, each with ten-second delays. Then the first signs of winter came, in the form of high winds, and skydiving virtually ceased at Goodhill for the year. The next year found me back in Alaska, and, hopeful of more jumping, I contacted Brodie Harrell. But once more we were busy fighting fires, and I never did any jumping there again. But I still have hopes; for it is what the earliest pioneers were after—and what man is learning to do—to turn and spiral, dip and plunge, truly to dive through the air with almost the freedom that belongs to the birds.

ATAHUA'S HATS

BY PAMELA ERIKSSON

FOR some women clothes are the means of approximating their looks to the vogue. Cosmetics, coiffure, corsetry and cut can produce the latest in fashionable images. When the great Garbo shed her elusive loveliness from the screen, crops of counterfeit Garbos sprang up like dragons' teeth. For a while the simian pout and marmoset Bardot eyes be-daisied the fields of fashion. Somehow, most miraculous of all, the tube-like Tutankhamen mothers of the 'twenties produced daughters with the contours of a Saarnen milch goat.

At what a cost! Such is the mass hypnotism of advertising, manipulated by the vast interests of the Fashion Business, that women immolate themselves on the altar of mass production: clothes have become a mask rather than a mould. Saddest of all is the virtual disappearance of the magic quality given to natural fabric by a fine and devoted craftsman. Chemical jugglery can never replace the silkworm and the merino, or reconstitute the superbly tough and malleable hide of a prime young bull.

So at least said the old Dorset cobbler, turning my Roumanian boots in his hand to catch the light in his dark little workshop.

" Bull's hide," he murmured, " and in the pits for a good seven years." Admiration beamed from him. " I shouldn't wonder whether you'd worn them seven years too, miss, before you had to come for a mend." (He was right!) " Worn them and loved them," he continued, peering into the toes. (He was right again.) " It's a lost art here." He felt an inner seam. " Sewed them up on the outside, they did, and then turned them inside out, soles and all. Though how the devil they did it . . . ! I'll have to patch up that seam as best I can."

Those boots (those 'swashbucklers' was an unkind comment) survived my student days, my years of roaming on sea and land, and a thick wedge of married life. They finally succumbed to my slushing through the dew-drenched Åland forest, calling the cows from their toadstool feasts on summer mornings.

And the 'icelander,' that heroic garb, knitted on gigantic needles from the crimpless waterproof wool of Iceland sheep, the traditional surtout of every Baltic deep-sea sailor, that very 'icelander' that was handed down from father to son, and worn by both for long years at sea and in the snowy Åland forests, that too, after a couple of generations, succumbed, though the ravelled remnants of its mightiness I keep for love of the smell of salt sea, moss and granite which still clings to its shreds.

But not one of the outlandish and beloved garments I have worn—to the unavailing disapproval of modish friends—has been quite so significant as Atahua's hat—such a spell-binding hat that I now cannot disentangle in my mind quite what was legend and what was fact about it. Fact, I do swear, was the little old gentleman who edged nearer and nearer to me where I stood waiting beside some landmark my husband had decreed as a tryst in the Piccadilly underground.

In the brilliant light beside that showcase his gold pince-nez, his pepper-and-salt goatee, his grey cloth suit, stiff collar and grey satin tie, his whole small precise rotundity shone with innocent and interested, though diffident inquiry.

At last he said, " It's your hat, madam." He removed his with a slight bow. " It's a most remarkable hat. You wouldn't consider selling it ? "

I was truly astonished; struck dumb, in fact.

" Ten—twenty pounds ? We have been hunting for an example of such a hat for a very long time. And if you'll excuse my saying so, the hat-band is a masterpiece, too. Such fine shell workmanship I've never seen in my life. That also we would most willingly acquire."

Like all enthusiasts, in the white heat of his enthusiasm he had forgotten to explain himself, but it was soon evident that he was the moving spirit in some ethnological museum which was not very particular what they paid for my hat as long as they got it. I took it off and let him handle it. He had the same expression as the Dorset cobbler handling the Roumanian boots.

" Lovely," he murmured, " and to think I've found it at last, probably the only example in England. And that Tuamotu hat-band ! Though you say the hat comes from another group. . . ."

I hated to tell him the truth.

" Nothing will induce me to sell either of them," I announced.

" But, madam ! " he cried. " You can come with me and I'll buy you a beautiful fashionable hat in the most exclusive shop in London ! "

At this moment Sven turned up. He looked a bit quizzical, having overheard the tail end of the conversation. As for the old gentleman he nearly fell over backwards with astonishment. It was rather a hot summer's day and Sven was wearing Atahua's other hat.

It was hard for the little man to digest the enormity of the fact that neither of us would sell to him. Finally I gave him Viggo's Raratonga address, in the hope that sometime or other the schooner would be trading round those rather remote atolls where Atahua's hats were made, and that in the slow course of Pacific time his museum would acquire one.

Even to think of Viggo in the stuffy Piccadilly underground was to forget the fungoid smell of the pumped draught, the crowding concrete, the hectic illumination. Once again I was breathing the pellucid air of the islands, and treading his white scrubbed deck on that memorable day, the only time I ever met him.

To me technically Viggo was a stranger, but rumour and his friends had filtered into most corners of the South Pacific, and from these I had gleaned the impression that the man and his vessel were identical. In some curious way trimness, sturdiness, independence, wisdom, grace and cleanliness were qualities they shared. Above all, Viggo was kind.

A mutual friend, bidding us farewell on the Papeete wharf, was earnest in his persuasion.

" You mustn't leave us " (and by ' us ' he meant the islands) " without meeting Viggo," he admonished. " Think better of that other plan of yours to round the Horn in a square-rigger. Nasty and cold down there. If you're so keen on these Scandinavians take a trip with Viggo. He's as Danish as when he first arrived in these parts, and that must now be some thirty years ago. But somehow one thinks of him as essentially part of the islands."

With the echo of that friend's insistence in our ears, we stood on the deserted Raratonga beach, helpless, for Viggo was asleep. Time was very short, and I knew that if we were to obey our friend's injunction, I must off with my clothes and swim for it.

There lay the schooner, the beauteous *Tiare Taporo*, the queen of the island seas, some three hundred yards from shore (or so it seemed) fast asleep in the noonday heat.

" Ahoy ! " I had shouted. "Ahoy! Ahoy!" Desperation added strength to my female gullet, and ' Ahoy ! ' echoed dully round the bay. " Ahoy ! " answered the tin flanks of a locked and deserted warehouse. " Ahoy ! " sighed the coral breakwater. But no sleeping beauty could have been more dream-locked than that slumbering schooner. Her dinghy bobbed a lullaby astern. No boat, no outrigger, no human form, not even a log was visible on the derelict beach.

The liner in which my mother and I were travelling from Tahiti to Auckland called at Raratonga for only a few hours. In the flaccid heat it had taken time and some determination to trudge in the glare along a coral track from the town. It would take time to trudge back. A meeting with Viggo must be now or never. My mother sat down on a stone with some resignation and scrabbled in her bag for a *pareu.*

" At least put it on when you get near the ship," she said, knowing that I had never mastered the art of swimming any distance in this winding sheet and invariably took it off in the water and made a turban of it.

It was a swim I still dream of : the little lapping waves, the lullaby swell that gently nursed me, the cool clasp of the water about my dusty limbs ; and then, much farther than I thought, but tantalisingly beautiful, the sleeping schooner, so charged with light, so woven into reflections, the dazzle of hot air shimmering off her cabin, the glitter of the sky's countenance imaged in the water, miraged on her hull, tossed back into the wriggling phantom of her own reflection steepling towards me over the water ; a being (for such I cannot help but call her) sleeping, confident, silent and static, yet interlaced in the trembling web of the elements. In me then there stirred that strange atavistic love-call for a vessel which some say has its roots in the slimy dawn of human history when jug-jawed man first triumphed over the sea astride a bundle of reeds.

Halfway there I thought of sharks. " Ahoy ! " I yelled again, sputtering. That one had an edge ; for presently, as I neared the vessel, I thought I saw the drawn curtain of a cabin port stir. Treading water, I unwound my turban and tucked it round my torso before swimming more decorously on.

Very wet, very stirred, very—if you will believe it—shy, I at last stood before Viggo on his immaculate deck, making a nasty puddle. He was very large—in all directions. I saw the grizzled golden hair on his chest bordered by the bright white of his unbuttoned shirt, and felt his immense and easy strength in the arm that lugged me up over the side before I looked in his face. It was like looking up at the face of a kind, worn old cliff—where quite a number of flowers grew in the crannies. I loved Viggo on the spot.

He grasped the situation immediately, woke the Kanaka boy snoring in the dinghy, sent him to fetch my mother who was still sitting forlornly on her stone, produced a towel and a bath-robe and told me to change in his cabin. When I emerged he quietly took the sopping *pareu* from my hand, and with two clothes-pegs, after wringing it over the side, affixed it to the rigging. My puddle had already been mopped up.

Looking back, it is hard to believe that all that followed—the tales and talk and interchange of ideas, the laughter, the solemn moments, the delightful inspection of the *Tiare Taporo* and the final desperate dash to the hooting liner, but above all the business about the hat, which later came to symbolise so much in our lives, happened within the limits of two or three hours. But so it is—our false conception of time as a regularly unfolding tape-measure diddles us into some strange misconceptions. Time stops and starts and darts about, and pauses, poised before some significant leap. The mind refuses to be bound by time, but will dwell lingeringly on some event, link it with another over an abyss of seconds, days, or years, and back and forth weave a whole web of timeless affiliations—as I do now with those few hours on board the *Tiare Taporo*. They were of greater moment than whole batches of years that had preceded them.

The key lay in Viggo's uncommon personality, a being fitting snugly into his ruggedly practical world, yet deferring to that aurora of imagination that flickers over it in indication of its roots in the cosmos. Otherwise he would just have sold me those hats, not bothering to recount the legendary that went into their weave. In fact, he would have forgotten everything but their price, which was high, for those parts.

I am tempted to describe in detail each of the delights of that fascinating little ship—the neat cotton curtains in the cabin ports; the prevailing odour of extreme cleanliness blended with the ocean tang; the cat, the dog, the trim of the rigging, the sturdy wheel, the arrangements of the cabins, the neatly battened hatches (for she was to sail next day); but only Viggo, with his mixture of proper pride and humility, could show her off as she should be shown, and now, alas, both are in limbo together. No 'Ahoy' will wake them from *that* deep sleep.

But the heart, the core, the soul of the schooner—for I realised that such it was from Viggo's manner when we entered it—I must describe. It was a sort of shop, the kind a child, playing shops, would dream about. It was small, low, and of an uneven shape, crammed between the nautical and domestic requirements of the vessel. Bright bales of cloth, beads, teapots, aluminium saucepans, primus-stoves, mirrors, combs, handbags, picture-frames, tinned sausages, sacks of sugar, twine, candles, rice and American cigarettes were stuffed or hung or tiered with jigsaw-like compactness in a very small space. Yet there seemed plenty of room. While we were in the shop two of Viggo's children, a lanky elfin boy and a lissome girl with humour dancing in her startling blue eyes, woke up and joined us, yawning behind delicate Polynesian fingers. They were to keep their father company this trip.

The talk veered to the idea that I should scrap all my plans to join the four-masted barque *Herzogin Cecilie* in Australia for the Horn trip to Europe and come with them instead.

" She would be glad, so glad of your young company," said Viggo, nodding at his daughter. The depth of my temptation was very great. Then I saw the hat.

" What a beautiful hat ! "

It lay on top of a sack of sugar, where a beam of sunlight fell on it. It glistered, shot with iridescence; yet looked at closely it was pearly white. Its weave was as fine as the finest grass linen, of an indescribable texture, a kind of malleable crispness. The edge was snappy and firm. A key pattern of sorts was inwoven round the brim in black. The black was as black and lustreless as soot, yet it too had life in it.

I picked it up. Its feel was jaunty. I held it on my fist and peeked the crown and brim. Though the weave was so soft it bent courteously into shape, and held the shape. I must have chuckled with satisfaction, for Viggo chuckled too.

" It's really a LOVELY hat ! " I exclaimed, " I must see it on someone." I turned and was about to clap it on his grizzled head when he held up his hand.

" No," he said, indicating a mirror. " Put it on yourself."

It fitted like the proverbial glove. Its brim curved down at an angle I had never before achieved. The high crown perched as jauntily as whipped cream. I tweaked the brim straight, patted the crown, tilted the hat back, and it was as demure as any maid could wish! Yet somehow it was a sexless sort of hat. Give it another set and a man could wear it, a man not too slavishly given over to the conventions. Whatever you wanted the hat did, and all the time it caressed your head and glowed as softly as a pearl.

"WHAT a hat!" I almost shouted.

Viggo was sitting on a sugar-sack.

"*Ja*," he said. "What a hat! I suppose you want to buy it."

"Yes," I said with conviction, though it had not occurred to me.

"Well, you can't have that one. It's an order." He hesitated slightly. "As a matter of fact if you buy one you really should buy two."

Though Viggo, obviously prosperous and content, must have been a good business man, it was not his business instinct which now actuated him. Apparently there was something special about these hats, and presently, indirectly, while we discussed the ways and means and time involved and the price and postage, what was possessing his mind leaked out.

So nebulous, so intermittent was the leak that even shortly afterwards I could not be certain of her name. It was something like 'Atahua'—sometimes he called her 'the old woman'—but as the years meandered on, the name he had said congealed on my lips to Atahua, and Atahua that strange, forlorn and obstinate old woman has remained.

On the atoll where it was now sometimes possible to coerce the women into the long-drawn-out labour of making these hats, Atahua had arrived in the aftermath of a hurricane. The skin on her slender bones was pulpy with long immersion. Matted with seaweed, her long grey hair lay half buried in the sand. They took her for dead when they found her in the morning light, on the beach, still clinging to some tangled wreckage. However, she was alive, incredibly; for, in the raging welter of hurricane, when sea and tortured air mingle to lose their identity in each other, she must have been swept unharmed over the reef. For many weeks she could not, or would not speak. When she did it was with words whose sense was dimmed by accents strange to the atoll dwellers. Foremost in her memory was a large, what seemed to her hosts a gigantic canoe, capable of immense voyages; for she looked with disdain at the miserable little craft they owned. When present at their launchings and returns to shore, she would start intoning a majestic and scornful kind of chant which made them all as frightened as the baleful glances from her snaky black eyes.

Atahua, unable in her numbed brain to remember even the name of the land from which she came, could only reiterate that she and others had been in this mighty vessel somewhere beyond the rim of the world when they were caught by the great hurricane and driven for weeks along with it, finally to crash on some hidden reef, from which she alone was spun onwards to live and mourn. Then she would break into a keening lament, with arms upraised, gazing out to sea. At times she would stand with her feet in the water, swaying and croaking defiance at the vicious element. The people shivered. It was obvious that in her own land she was a witch queen.

Time slipped by and interest in Atahua waned. Her comings and goings were no longer remarked, and even when her lament was heard echoing along the beach no children gathered among the palms to peep at her. Then one day a rare trading schooner appeared, anxious for trocas shell, or copra or anything that might be salable in the outside world. The wares displayed on its deck exuded temptation, but the atoll people had little to offer in exchange. Great was their chagrin and surprise when Atahua produced two hats of exquisite workmanship and bore off a little store of desirables in exchange.

All had heard the trader exhorting her to produce more hats for his next visit, had seen her rather scornful smile, and had noted her ambiguous remark that the hats were dangerous if wrongly used. They begged her to show them how to make the hats, but her reply was derisively frank. She would not; they could guess the process but they were too thick in the skull ever to guess right; and their fingers were like bananas anyway. At the schooner's next visit she had six hats ready, pearly, glistering, soft and crisp; three sets of twins; for Atahua always made hats in exactly matching pairs, varying the black pattern for each pair but never repeating it.

At the trader's suggestion that she should teach the women and have dozens of hats ready for his next visit she pulled a wry face, shook her head, but gave no further explanation. Thinking she was afraid of the price dropping he offered her a commission on every hat the atoll produced. At this she laughed wheezily; for Atahua was now shrivelling with age, so skinny, so frail of body that it looked as if her secret would puff away with her in the next hurricane. But she lived on, comfortably by atoll standards, on the proceeds of the few hats she had ready each time the schooner called. Gradually it became known, by putting together various hints Atahua herself dropped, that her hats were something altogether out of the ordinary, not only in weave and fabric. They were, in fact, magic hats. Potent, dangerous, infallible, misused they could cause incurable grief. She laughed savagely to herself when she thought of this, her revenge for all she had lost of memory, home and love. Deeply believing in their power, she deliberately sent them out in the world to cause havoc among her fellow beings.

At this time Viggo had started calling at the atoll. Struck by the remarkable vitality in the ancient creature and aware of the whole hat situation from a trader's point of view, he set about gaining Atahua's confidence. So much so that in the end some sort of conscience stirred in her. He had listened attentively, without a smile, to her confession. He was not so ready with words, and as he told me, his hesitant phrases tried to encompass what was after all a profound, almost a platonic idea.

Each pair of hats was indissolubly linked. Sold separately to random buyers they could be the cause of the greatest discontent and restlessness in the wearers, who would be forced endlessly to seek each other, not knowing what they sought. Even if by remote chance they did meet, they might have hostile natures, and would struggle in vain to free themselves from each other, hopelessly. until death came—and even after death, Atahua had hinted. . . .

The right way to use a pair of hats was for one person, either man or woman, to acquire the pair, and then to be extremely careful, after wearing one, to whom the other was given. Best to choose the opposite sex, a being one was willing to live and die with. Best, in fact, to use the hats, well—as a love potion.

Viggo's half-deprecating smile as he suggested this clashed with the mellow shine in his eyes. I only half listened while he went on to tell how the atoll women had at last pieced together the whole process of Atahua's hat-making, the soakings and strippings, the poundings and bleachings and stretchings and bindings, and so, each woman contributing what she had spied, at length evolved the manufacture. For a time they made them assiduously, extemporising patterns of their own which were vulgarly rococo in comparison with Atahua's chaste black key motif. They did not make them in pairs, and they never quite achieved the same fine quality. Now they had tired of the whole business and it was hard to get a hat at all. Atahua still occasionally made a pair. Hers were the only ones that were—er—powerful.

Without more ado I believed him. After a year's wandering in the islands I had become used to some strange occurrences. If the unburning firebed of Mbau was a demonstrable fact, as well as the moon madness of the Levuka balolo; if I could accept the earthbound divinity of Dalice Leaf, the goddess turtle, called by her Kandavu priest with a whispering chant that brought her from miles away at sea, why not accept the peculiar power inherent in Atahua's hats?

I borrowed some money from my mother and gave Viggo what would be my address in London. As I wrote it down he began to speak again, repeating the invitation to sail with them and get the hats myself.

At that moment the warning toot of the steamer, mournfully muffled by the headland, sounded like a knell. Wild excitement and indecision swept over me. Three months in this gorgeous schooner sailing round the atolls! A quick (a very quick it would have to be) change of plans! Then the beckoning phantom of that huge and famous square-rigger, even now approaching the Spencer Gulf, rose up in my mind's eye—if I should miss my tryst with her!—my heart beat fast when I thought of that mammoth voyage in the high southern latitudes, the sweep round the Horn, that long ocean furrow to plough up the Atlantics.

The steamer hooted again. Viggo already had his motor-boat ready and we stepped in. Shouting above the 'phutter' of the engine and ducking the spray, I told him why I could not come with him. He shook his head, but his eyes twinkled. "Mad—young—person!" he growled, but further comment was drowned in the now anxious and presumably also angry bellows of the steamer, which was weighing anchor but still had a jacob's ladder dangling. Clambering up as the propellers began to churn, I heard Viggo's voice before it faded in the din.

"I send you those hats. Remember—Atahua's own hats—be careful—and good luck!"

In a horribly few moments the spray and fleeting time had dimmed the image of Viggo, that kindly rock-like man, bobbing in his motor-boat. His cliff of a face, which had given me such a feeling of intimacy and understanding as he hauled me out of the water, was clear one minute, the next but a blur as it looked up; then a mere pale patch, an excrescence in the undulating shape of the boat, and finally, nothing, for the boat itself swiftly became a mere disappearing excrescence on the restless water. It was the first, last and only time I encountered Viggo in the flesh in this life; but in some queer way I have for nearly thirty years kept the feeling that it was not the first, last or only time in some other state of existence.

Nearly a year later a parcel from Raratonga arrived at my address in London. In it was a pair of Atahua's hats. They were neatly rolled, but sprang into shape with little help immediately they were freed from their bonds. In the crown of one was a folded note, laboriously penned. 'Atahua's last hats. She died before we left. Use them well. Good luck.' Use them well. It was a solemn injunction. Crowned and bound, I thought as I tried one on. It seemed that only one person existed, could ever exist, to whom I would dare to give the other hat. Oddly enough, he also was the master of a superb vessel, or rather, she was his mistress. But I had to wait nearly another year, till *Herzogin* had completed her annual chore of girdling the earth, before I could give it to him. In all honesty I had to confess to him that there was magic in the gift.

"In this case no magic is required," said Sven, with a lordly smile—and twenty years later, when we sadly consigned the tattered remains of Atahua's hats to the geyser, he added a codicil:

"The hats are gone, but the magic remains."

AN INNOCENT IN THE AIR

BY ROBERT HUNTER

I DARE say hundreds, if not thousands of people have flown over various parts of Africa in a single-engined plane. This does not make it any the less of an adventure for one who has not. My particular single-engined passage was from Blantyre in Nyasaland to Mbeya in Tanganyika: a matter, I suppose, of about a thousand miles. To make it seem more adventurous I should add that before stepping into the single-engined plane, I had stepped off a four-engined Comet. In the Comet, although it seemed to take an unconscionable time to get off the ground, we were round the thirty-thousand mark in next to no time. In the single-engined plane, a Beaver, I don't think we were ever more than two or three thousand feet above the ground.

At Blantyre Airport they weighed my baggage carefully; they also weighed me. In the background a lot of newspapers and several packages were also being weighed. I was relieved to see all this, for it showed they were taking no chances. Then the pilot came: he hesitated in front of the weighing-machine and moved on. Evidently he knew his own weight, so that was all right. He smiled at me as he passed, for we had met the previous day. This was when I arrived at the hotel. There was a big party there—multi-racial—Europeans, Africans and Indians. As he and his party were more or less monopolising the bar I had asked him if there was anywhere else I could go for a drink and he had said, "Have one with me." The party had interested me, because not so long before there had been a certain amount of trouble in Nyasaland, which now seemed to be forgotten; or else everyone was putting on a very good act.

They made me get up rather early at the hotel because my plane left at seven and the airport was ten miles out. To my surprise the pilot was not a Scot, whereas everyone else I had met in Blantyre *was*. The receptionist at the hotel came from Glasgow; the lady who sold me a toothbrush, from Dundee; the place where I bought a pair of sandals was run by a man from Aberdeen; and the bank manager definitely was a Scot. I don't know where he came from but should say the Western Isles.

At six A.M. it is not so easy to eat a full-course breakfast. I tried, but the second egg would not go down. Yet I knew it was essential to eat, since a single-engined plane would not carry provender or hostesses.

Therefore I arrived at the airport with slight nausea. At an airport there is always plenty of time to spare after one has been dealt with by the officials. So I went and had another shot at breakfast with not much success; number two hotel egg was still only half-way down.

As I was the only passenger I assumed the privilege of taking the seat next the pilot. Here I would be able to see everything. I must say I found it fascinating, particularly the instrument panel right before my eyes. Obviously only one or two of those innumerable dials were of any importance, or the pilot would never be able to look where he was going; he would have to be watching those dials all the time. I proved correct in my theory. Apart from the fact that he ran his fingers up and down some of the dials and tested his radio set before setting off, he never looked at any of them again, or if he did it was done when I was not watching.

I was rather disappointed at our take-off. It was so unspectacular. A European gave the pilot a nod, a sleepy African raised a hand in farewell, the pilot pushed a lever with a knob on the end of it and he may have done something with his feet that I did not see; we raced across some two hundred yards of Africa—and were away.

Soon the altimeter showed five thousand, but I am sure this only meant five thousand above sea level, for we could not have been more than one thousand above the earth below us. It was out of the question to ask the pilot because the din was impossible. I contented myself therefore by watching what he was doing. He did not seem to be doing anything. He was simply sitting in his seat staring ahead of him. His mind may have been on the previous day's cocktail-party. I only guess this. He had a map by his side but never used it; so I took it myself and studied it. I understand sea-charts which tell you what sort of bottom the sea has, exposed and unexposed rocks, depths and shallows; in fact, everything you ought and want to know: but this thing told me nothing, at least nothing about the *air* in the same sort of way as a sea-chart tells you about the *sea*. What I should have liked to know was whether we were going to hit mud or rocks if we crashed, and whether we were likely to have a constant air stream in a certain direction, as you get constant tidal streams. It was a most amateur map in my opinion, and I put it back where I had found it. True, it showed a high mountain right on our course, but I could see that with my own eyes straight ahead of us. It was the things I could not see that I should have liked to know about.

Peering down I saw native huts, out of which children came running to wave as we flew over; and I saw dogs, as many dogs as children. There was also an appreciable amount of cultivation; red soil, with terraces for preventing erosion, clearly discernible. I saw footpaths, too, and once we flew over a road. Uncultivated land was mostly green, so there had clearly been plenty of rain, and this made me look up at the sky, where I saw nimbus clouds above us. I did not in the least want to run into rain; for rain in Africa too often means electric storms, and if your only engine is struck by lightning, where does one go for another?

Our first stop was at Lilongwe, a provincial headquarters. From the air it appeared to be a sizable place for this part of Africa, although it might be termed a dump elsewhere. A provincial headquarters carries a provincial commissioner, who carries with him a district commissioner or two, and a certain number of experts, such as a public-works man, an agriculturist, a veterinary expert, probably a doctor and possibly a hospital. There may also be such people as water-diviners and soil conservators, and a livestock officer. All these gentlemen will have native clerks, who will have assistants, so it is easily seen how the population of a provincial headquarters can mount up: especially as many of the men will have wives and families, who will want to visit shops, so there will be shopkeepers too. A provincial headquarters can be prosperous even if its sole industry is government. Nevertheless, the only thing it will probably produce is paper, vulgarly termed 'bumph.'

Some kind person produced tea for us at Lilongwe airstrip, so I had my sixth cup of the day. Then, after an African had filled our tanks for us, we set off again—for Mzimba. This is not another provincial headquarters but a district commissioner's post. I respect the men who run these 'outposts of Empire.' How the African will get on when the time comes to part with their services, as I am assuming it will, is problematical; anyhow in the early stages.

We had quite a long wait at Mzimba because a strong tail-wind had speeded us on, and a passenger was expected. So we had more tea, and this time some sandwiches were included. A much-thumbed fashion journal lay on a chair, and since there was nothing else to read I had a look at it. I was amused to think of some of the costumes I saw in that magazine and some of the stiletto heels; and then try to place them in Central Africa, and Mzimba in particular. There could scarcely be any costume and footwear less appropriate. I was looking for the third time at the picture of a particularly pretty girl in a particularly outrageous frock, when my eyes strayed upwards and there, right before me, stood a girl. I would not say she was wearing quite the same frock, but it was pretty smart all the same, and she certainly had stiletto heels. Her arms were tanned a deep yellow and she wore no hat.

"We heard you were coming," she said, "so I've brought you down a bit of chicken and some coffee."

Oh, most gracious lady of Mzimba! Chicken and coffee! What more could a man want? I mumbled my thanks and asked how she knew about me.

"Bush telephone," she laughed. "Tom Holland told us. He'll be waiting for you at Mzuzu."

She stayed talking for a while and then tactfully disappeared while I got on with the chicken, which I ate with my fingers. Then I remembered the pilot, so he joined me and also ate chicken.

Presently a car drove up and a young man in shorts and bare legs came towards us. Apparently the expected passenger was no longer to be expected, and the young man had come to tell us so. There was therefore no need to wait. Flinging our chicken-bones into the bush for the use of Mzimba mongrels, we looked round for the Mzimba Good Samaritan, but not finding her gave the coffee-flask to the airways attendant. The same unspectacular departure, and within forty minutes we were preparing to land again.

Quite a crowd had gathered at Mzuzu airstrip to greet us and I felt most important. But they had not come for me; it was the other expected passenger they wanted. There were four Europeans, one a lady, and a number of young Africans—clerks perhaps, as they were all carrying papers. Nearly all African clerks are young; the sign of a young country. I daresay old people are harder to train, especially as they may not want to learn. The Europeans paid little attention to me but bombarded the pilot with questions. I think they were trying to discover why the expected passenger had not materialised. The Africans, however, scanned me with evident curiosity. Perhaps an unknown white man descending from the skies *was* a bit of an event at Mzuzu. They may have thought I was the Monckton Commission, possibly the British Prime Minister, who they must have heard was somewhere about, or they may merely have thought I was some ancient missionary; perhaps Livingstone himself.

Slightly piqued at being ignored I went across to the nearest European and asked if Tom Holland would be coming along. It was an African who answered. "Bwana Holland will soon to come. He is at the tailor's shop trying a coat on." I thought it an odd time to have a coat tried on, for he was supposed to be meeting me, but I remembered that tail-wind. We were early again. And then suddenly a Land-Rover appeared and pulled up about fifty yards from us, not in a cloud of dust, because it had been raining, but in a most almighty skid. He apologised for being late, but I said it was we who were early. I did, however, ask if the coat fitted and he looked most surprised. We had a pleasant few minutes together, chatting mainly about the old country, for his father and I were neighbours; and then it was time to get going again. As I was climbing into my seat he pressed an envelope into my hands and said, "You might give this to the D.C. at Karonga, would you?"

I said of course I would, provided I saw him, to which he replied, "You'll see him all right. Karonga's not all that big. Oh, and by the way, the document's secret."

I was now a V.I.P. A Queen's messenger. For all I knew the fate of Africa rested in my hands; except that Tom Holland was not the sort of person to entrust the fate of any country into my hands.

I began by enjoying the trip to Karonga, for the sun was shining. As we approached a mountain ridge, however, clouds began to form and come lower. I found myself wondering how the pilot was going to avoid the mountain-tops which lay straight ahead of us, if he was not going to see them. Of course I knew all about altimeters, but were they reliable in Central Africa? After about twenty minutes I knew we must be over those mountains, but I saw nothing. And then there came a sudden break in the clouds and to my alarm I saw jagged peaks not more than a few yards below us. I glanced at the pilot. He was obviously unaware of what lay underneath. He was sitting in his normal posture staring into space, but this time chewing gum. Worse still, he had a newspaper by his side and kept glancing at it. I tightened my seat-belt semiconsciously and waited for something to happen. In a few minutes the sun came out again and I saw the sandy shores of Lake Nyasa. I could also see Tanganyika and Portuguese territory. Directly below, and at intervals of only about a hundred yards, were fishermen's huts, with nets spread out to dry. There must be more fish than I thought in the lake, judging by all those nets, but where can they market their catches? Perhaps they do not attempt to market them and eat the fish themselves and give what they do not want to their animals. To market fish one needs communications and I did not see any roads.

After leaving the lake-shore we ran into rain. It was easy to see it coming, and to give the pilot full credit he dodged the worst storms most successfully. Electric storms in small planes are no fun. I was glad when we left the hills and came into sun again; still gladder when we touched down at Karonga, for I knew there was a meal waiting and I was hungry again.

I think most of the village turned out for our arrival. They were not an exuberant crowd but they were interested in our movements. The District Commissioner led the way from the airstrip to his house, then came his wife, then myself, the pilot, and a complete stranger who had appeared from behind a shed—a secret agent perhaps, planning to steal my secret document. The D.C.'s wife, as well as being a wife, was also the airways agent. One of her duties was to provide a meal for the company's passengers. As I fell into this category I got the special airways lunch which included a paper napkin bearing their crest. It was an excellent meal, with plenty of fruit. Africa never lets one down as far as fruit is concerned.

We stayed rather longer than we meant at the meal, so had to hurry down to the airstrip. Then I saw the reason for the stranger who had appeared from behind the shed. He was a passenger—a young man in shirt, shorts and sandals. He also had a brown beard, quite a large one. When Karonga was no more than a speck in the distance my heart missed a beat. I had forgotten to deliver the secret document! Lips tight, fingers trembling, I removed the envelope from my pocket and held it in front of the pilot. "Awfully sorry," I shouted. "Forgot to deliver it. Could we go back?"

The pilot, who was chewing gum again, hesitated a moment and then nodded. We made a pronounced turn, with one wingtip pointing at the sky and the other at the ground, and were facing Karonga again. In a few minutes we were at Karonga, with a surprised D.C. staring at us.

"Awfully sorry," I said, and tried to pass it off with a joke. "Too good a lunch, you know. I forgot to give you this." I handed him the document.

The D.C. glanced at the envelope and said, rather casually, I thought, "Oh, thanks." Then he opened it and read the contents.

"Is it important?" I asked, angling to know if it had been really necessary to turn back.

"Up to a point," he replied. "As it's marked Secret I suppose I can't very well tell you. But it's something to do with home leave—mine."

I was so ashamed and yet so annoyed that I made him give me a receipt, and as the pilot was obviously impatient the poor fellow had to *run* to his office. After this our passage to Fort Hill was uninterrupted.

Fort Hill is no beauty spot. It has, however, the merit of possessing the widest runway we had met since leaving Blantyre. It was here, during the troubles, that the insurgents dragged trees across the runway, anticipating airborne police from Tanganyika. Two white men greeted us on our arrival; a thickset man of about forty and a youngster scarcely out of his teens. These were the airport officials, their principal job being, so far as I could gather, the arranging of flights of locally recruited boys by chartered aircraft to the South African goldmines. The airport, apart from the runway, consisted of an office, a table and a chair, with a small room adjoining which had a radio transmitting set, worked by the youngster scarcely out of his teens.

The passenger with the brown beard got off at Fort Hill. When I looked round to say good-bye to him he had gone. I never learnt what his job was, but he might have been a recruit for the mines. I was going to ask the airport men about him when my attention was distracted by the arrival of an African. This man carried a large briefcase from which he extracted, not without dignity, a document. This document required me to furnish the Fort Hill authorities with certain information: my age, my purpose in visiting and leaving Fort Hill, the amount of Nyasaland currency in my possession, and, if I remember rightly, my religion. Everyone has to fill in such forms when moving from one country to another and I find them a nuisance. As often as not you have to fill them in on the plane, and as they warn you not to carry a filled fountain-pen or a

Biro, and you've forgotten to bring a pencil, filling them in is not easy.

Once more nimbus clouds were closing down on us, making the pilot anxious to be off. The last words of the thickset airport controller were not reassuring, "There's a gap in the mountains—if you're lucky enough to find it."

Of course we found the gap. By this time I had every confidence in my pilot. He was the world's best gum-chewer, but what matter if he got you to your destination? They were, however, rather high mountains, and I noticed the pilot continually fiddling with one of the three knobbed levers on his dashboard. I assumed he was intent on getting higher up and this suited me. Then we ran into mist and I saw no more. The pilot put on his earphones, stopped chewing gum and began to talk to someone. I hoped no other plane was approaching Mbeya that day. Soon after, a runway appeared through the mist and we landed in a fierce rainstorm. I was soaked through and through getting from the plane to the airport building, but felt somewhat mollified on hearing a kindly Scottish voice say, "Oh, you poor soul: come in and get dry." Yes, another Scot; a lady from Aberdeen: O.C. Mbeya Airport, Airways representative, Travel agent —and no doubt other things as well.

An African Customs official approached me and asked if I had anything to declare. I said "Nothing," whereupon he asked me most politely if I would mind his running his hand through my baggage. I said, "Of course, but please open the case yourself, my hands are too wet." Out came the old flour-bag with its four pounds of coffee. "What is this? Oh, coffee. A gift perhaps? Have you any wines or spirits? Cigars or tobacco? Two hundred cigarettes—I see. Now I will close your case again." Generally they would ask about my camera, but at Mbeya they did not. Johannesburg was the place for cameras: they made me sign a declaration to say I would take mine out of the country with me and I had no option but to sign. This annoyed me a good deal, for I had been told Johannesburg was the very place to do a good swap in cameras, which I wanted to do. I carried that camera all across Africa, into Greece and through Germany, without effecting a swap. I swapped it—badly—in London, at the very place where they had told me Johannesburg was the place for swapping cameras.

On reaching Mbeya town, my pilot, who had also been drenched, invited me to the club for a drink. I think the entire white population of Mbeya must have forgathered here; I suppose it was the rush hour. There were P.C.s and D.C.s, bank managers, police, business men, husbands and wives, and even some children. On hearing that I had to hang about Mbeya for three days before getting a connection to Dar es Salaam, the wheels of hospitality began to revolve. Practically every minute of my three-day stay was mapped out for me; cocktail-parties, motor-drives, tea-parties, a round or two of golf. Never a dull moment in Mbeya, so far as I was concerned.

The pilot and I dined together in the hotel that first evening. There were things I had to ask him, but before I opened up I explained they were only academic questions—" On that flight from Mzuzu to Karonga: weren't we rather near those mountain-tops ? "

" Yes—but I had plenty of reserve power."

" That may be. But supposing the engine had spluttered ? You may have had plenty of reserve power; but you hadn't a reserve engine."

He smiled. " But it didn't splutter."

" But if it had ? "

He thought this over. " Well, if it had spluttered and gone on spluttering—I suppose we might have spluttered too."

" You mean—crashed ? "

He seemed to treat the whole thing as a joke. " I didn't say ' crashed '; I only said ' spluttered.' "

I don't know what he meant.

I must confess to being rather proud of myself over this single-engined flight across Africa: stupidly so, of course, but then I am no aviator. During my three days in Mbeya I was always looking round for victims; to tell them all about it. At last I found a young European sitting alone at the hotel one evening. Here was fair game, I considered; obviously a young farmer, possibly a South African or Rhodesian, probably spent all his life on a farm. I sidled up to him and sat down.

" I've had quite an amusing experience," I began. " I've just travelled clean across Nyasaland in a single-engined plane. It's absolutely different, you know, from doing it in a four-engined machine which the ordinary person does."

The young man regarded me earnestly. " It is, isn't it ? I've just flown out from England myself in a single-engined bus."

I might have been a motor-tyre which had just gone over a nail. I could almost hear the air oozing out of myself. " You don't mean you—came by yourself ? "

" Yes, and I enjoyed it. Some of the longer stretches were rather boring."

" But there wouldn't be many mountains on your route ? "

" I wouldn't say that. The Pyrenees, for instance."

His coolness exasperated me. " The Pyrenees ! H'm ! Not very formidable I should imagine. How long did it take you ? "

" Four weeks."

" You could have done it as quick by sea," I observed, slightly triumphant.

" I know. I had engine trouble—had to wait quite a time in Spain for spare parts. Engine nearly conked out over the Pyrenees—some loose metal filings."

I no longer wanted to talk about my adventure. The next person I approached would almost certainly be someone who had not even bothered about an engine; a man who had *glided* from England, in fact. So I changed the subject and told my victim how wet I had got at Mbeya Airport when coming in.

MOUNTAIN SOUP

BY BARNEY DICKINSON

'*Que será, será;*
Será lo que debe ser;
La vida te lo dirá;
Que será, será.'

UNLIKE the singer of that song, when he was very young Rollo did not ask his mother what he would be: whether he would be handsome, or whether he would be rich. Had he done so, she would have told him straightforwardly, for she was an honest woman, that he would certainly not be handsome—this was obvious—and that it was more than doubtful if he would ever be rich. For, though his grandfather had been a millionaire, his father and his four uncles had married the five most beautiful women in Buenos Aires (of whom she was one), and as a result had already spent most of the Old Man's fortune.

No one could fathom where Rollo had got his poor looks. His father and his uncles were rightly considered *muy buenmozos* and very athletic. Rollo might have asked his parents not, in the words of the song, whether he would be handsome or rich, but whether it would matter very much being neither. He would have received an unequivocal answer to this also; for those in the higher social circles of Buenos Aires at that time set great store by both. In the pleasant suburb of Buenos Aires where he lived, his schoolmates, following the prevalent habit of Anglo-Argentine schoolboys, gave him a Spanish nickname—*mono*. From early childhood his several sisters, all beautiful, and with that innocent cruelty only sisters can show, referred to him as the Missing Link; and later, when he went to a public school in England, he was known as the South American Neanderthal.

These things had their effect on Rollo; he became painfully shy. He should not have done so, for his athletic prowess made up for his poor looks. Rollo himself, however, reasoned that anyone could barge about at Rugger, or sling uppercuts in the ring: only some fellows could make the girls giggle on Speech Day, and he, Rollo, wasn't one of them.

Perhaps Josephine, the first Josephine, came nearest to nipping this complex in the bud. One of Rollo's sisters was at school in the Cumberland Lake District, and Josephine was her best friend. She came from a village rectory, though she had been born out East. Rollo's sister imagined that a girl with that sort of a background would understand and probably discover the real Rollo; who was, after all, a pretty decent fish. Josephine was about fifteen at the time, and Rollo seventeen—though he looked older.

All three went to spend a holiday at the rectory. There was a farmer nearby who, apparently believing Rollo to be a potential rival for Josephine's hand, took an instant dislike to him; and, hearing that he came from the Argentine, challenged him to ride a horse that was supposed to be rather wild. Of course Rollo, who was quite accustomed to horses, though never in England, accepted at once. They went over to the farm stables. The beast was produced; Rollo leapt into the saddle gaucho fashion, while the girls applauded and the farmer scowled. A gate into a neighbouring paddock was opened. Rollo, somewhat surprised to find his steed behaving in a normal manner, cantered into the field. It was inhabited by some other horses. Rollo, not being used to the illiberal habits of English horses, was horrified to observe these horses suddenly charge towards him. Alarm and consternation followed his original horror when they set upon his mount and bit it in various places. The horse bolted madly, pursued by the others, still biting. As Rollo said later, "My life was in danger, the horse was *loco*." He threw himself off, landed on his head in a drinking-trough, and was badly concussed. He had to stay in bed for several days, and Josephine nursed him. She was sweet to him. When he was better, they would sit under a pergola in the rectory garden, and she would allow him to hold her hand while the ancient elms whispered. The farmer was not seen again.

Unhappily, very soon afterwards, Rollo's sister and her friend went to a finishing-school in Paris. Rollo, in due course, joined his father's banana-importing business in Buenos Aires. His job entailed going to the B.A. docks every morning, just after dawn, to count the bunches of bananas being unloaded from Brazil, and he worked till midday. He became interested in his job, he liked bananas, and it was good to have all the afternoon off. This gave him ample time to mix in the social activities of the sunny city, and to meet the girls. It was not that he had forgotten Josephine, but he now concluded that despite his ugliness (which he could *not* forget), all one had to do to win the love of a lady was to show a certain amount of gumption.

He reckoned without the sensitivities of the B.A. belles. They thought him a bit of a *bruto*; especially when he butted into the gay conversations of better-looking boys, shoving them aside, and insisting on talking about his revolting bananas. They were not to know that the poor fellow was still, at heart, painfully shy; that his self-conscious, rather blunt assurance was based on one hand-holding experience with a girl who, perhaps because of her wider background, was more sensible of true values than they would ever be.

So as time went by, the doubts

that had assailed him on those faraway Speech Days returned; and, in order to disprove them to himself, he started trying too hard.

There was Mimi, the young ballet star, petite and dark; as beautiful as a swan on a silver lagoon. Goodness only knows what she saw in Rollo. Perhaps she had had a surfeit of graceful male ballet dancers and craved for something more rugged. Unhappily he put the wrong foot forward. He informed her, in a well-meaning way, that she could not dance—which was true—on the floor of a night-club. She stalked off, looking like Boadicea about to mount her chariot.

There was Josie, the champion swimmer; and Rollo's grandfather had given the swimming-pool to the Club. Whether she liked him for himself or not, who knows. He was only a moderate swimmer, and eventually she teamed up with a demi-god of Teutonic descent who could do the crawl.

There was Bessie, the lovely Welsh girl from Chubut, whose father had been Evans Camera in the valley. She was a photographer's model, and a delight to behold. She told Rollo that she admired the mould of his features; Rollo was flattered. But when she suggested a little venture, asking him for one thousand pesos to set herself up in her own photographic studio, Rollo saw the light and shied off.

Yet he would not admit defeat, or surrender to disillusion. He went on trying; till he met the heiress. She was a lot older than Rollo, and some said that she was a bit queer. Rollo's beautiful sisters tried to dissuade him; he became stubborn, and courted the heiress. Things came to a head. Then, inexplicably, he again put the wrong foot forward. It was during a *tête-à-tête* dinner. He told her that he considered her father to be an exploiter of the poor; that the rope-soled slippers he manufactured in his factory, and which every peon in the Argentine used, were purposely made to last only a fortnight. The ensuing argument this time was vitriolic. The waiters in the discreet little restaurant near the Plaza San Martin looked on in incredulous horror as the lady flung fork, spoon and knife at him.

That did it. To blazes with girls, the silly donkeys. He applied for a job as a lowly second in a remote sheep-farm in Patagonia; and, since nobody ever wanted to go there, he got the job. This time he immediately fell in love, not with a girl, but with the land he had come to. It was tremendous. He had never seen anything like it. The enormous table-lands riven by great curling canyons; the vast forests and the majestic snowy mountains. It was a rugged land, beautiful in its ruggedness. The silvery rivers threaded their way through it with an abandon that defied description. Rollo was enthralled. Men were of small importance in such an environment, he thought, and women practically non-existent. Anyway there were none of any moment at the estancia, which was a relief.

He loved the work. Never before

had he felt so much at home as he did working the sheep and cattle in their respective yards. He rode all over the arid ranges of the pre-cordillera, and tamed his own colts. He fished for the rainbow and brook trout that crowded the rippling rivers, and hunted the wily guanaco on the table-lands. If he thought about life in Buenos Aires at all, it was with a slight shudder. How foolish of him to have taken himself so seriously! The mood of his life was changing.

On occasions he was able to visit the town of San Martin de los Andes, to the west of the estancia, on the shores of Lake Lacar. San Martin is a beautiful place; a fertile bowl with wooded mountains rising on every side, lying snug in the Cordillera—a little timbered town, guarded by fine poplars standing like sentinels along the irrigation canals by the roads. From the western end of the town the deep-blue lake stretches fiordlike for twenty miles towards the fierce ranges that divide Argentina from Chile. There is a myriad of bays and coves along its coastline; there are deep-set rivers flowing down tortuous gorges: brown and red cliffs glisten, topped by green forest; and, above all, there is the hint of high immaculate snows. Lacar is one of the loveliest of lakes.

Rollo thought so, too, on that hot summer day, when he went for a trip in a launch belonging to one of the sawmills at the far end. It is not a big lake, by southern Andean standards, and the launch was soon close to the narrows where the lake gives place to a much smaller one called Nonthué. At the far end of this little lake, hugging the water's edge, lay the settlement of Hau-Hum—their destination. Rollo saw a cluster of buildings, yards and stacked lumber. Smoke flowed thickly from the long chimney of a sawmill; and, near this, he could see a low log-built house set in a garden ablaze with flowers.

"That is Don Santiago Van Dormer's place," said the pilot of the launch. "*El viejo* came here many years ago, before all this was National Park. He came from Africa, where his family had land, but he foresaw much trouble with the *negros* there, so he came to this country; where, *por Dios*, he has much trouble with the Chilenos. Don Santiago is old now; there was nothing here when he first came. He had many cattle and horses, but Chilenos steal his stock.

"Years ago," continued the pilot, "it was agreed that the frontier between Chile and Argentina should be fixed along a high crest or on a divide between watersheds. This was not a practicable agreement for these southern mountains, *señor*, and your English king, *Eduardo el Septimo*, was asked to arbitrate. He was represented by Sir Thomas Holditch, who used his common sense and declared the main dividing ranges to be the frontier, despite the occasional deviation of the watershed. Lake Lacar, *señor*, drains into the Pacific. For this reason many Chilenos still claim the area as their own—though not officially, of course. That is why

Don Santiago has trouble with the *bandidos*, whom he cannot fight any more, for he is old. So they started yonder sawmill, which is a more profitable business. But they say his only son, Don Juan, does not want to remain here; for his wife does not like it, and he is a city man. Soon you will meet *el viejo* and his son." Having vouchsafed this information of his own free will, this intelligent pilot said no more.

Rollo was relieved to get into the shade of the Van Dormer's estancia house. He introduced himself to the old man with the long beard who was sitting on the verandah. This was Don Santiago Van Dormer, *el viejo*. He greeted Rollo in Spanish, motioning him to sit down. After that he lapsed into his former immobility. Presently another man appeared, and made himself known as Don Juan, speaking in English. Noticing Rollo's surprise, he smiled and said, "My father, as you probably know from that most erudite pilot of the launch, is an Afrikaner. But his mother was English, and my mother's family came out from Scotland in 1825. None of them speaks English any more, but I know the value of languages, and I studied English when I was reading law in Cordoba. Some day I hope to travel. Perhaps you, *señor*, have been to England ? "

Rollo admitted that he had been educated there; and, having detected a certain melancholy in Don Juan's tone, added, " But what a lovely place this is. Who would want to go anywhere when you can live here?"

Don Juan sighed. "On a day like today it is beautiful," he said, "but not always. There is much rain and snow in winter. Up in the mountains we have trouble with Chileno rustlers in summer; and I am no mountaineer. There is a high pass there, and we believe that is where the Chilean *bandidos* are most active. We have trouble, too, with the National Park officials, who covet our camp. My wife was born in Buenos Aires; she cannot live here. My sisters have been living in the capital for some years. I would like to do the same, but I must not, because of *el viejo*. He can live nowhere else but here. He created this place. My mother is dead. He has no one but me. Me, that is," he corrected himself abruptly, " and my daughter. Aha ! here she comes."

A little girl came running towards them. She was the bonniest creature Rollo had ever seen. Her hair was long down her back, spun gold shining in the sun. Her eyes were the bluest of blues, putting that lovely summer sky to shame, and her face was as brown as a nut. "Come and say hello to the *señor*," said Don Juan. "Say it in English like I've taught you."

Rollo stood up and took the proffered hand. " Hello," he said.

"Hello," she replied shyly. He studied that enchanting face. How extraordinarily pretty it was; and it had another quality, too. One that he seemed to recognise. "Have I seen you before ? " he asked.

"No, *señor*. I have never seen you before. I would not forget your face." She smiled slightly.

"No, I suppose not," murmured Rollo, blushing. Once seen never forgotten, he thought glumly. Now he felt awkward and shy with this little girl. "You speak English very well," he said gruffly, almost fiercely. "How old are you?"

"I am ten," she answered calmly, standing very still, as though undergoing a familiar ritual; "and my name is Josephine Van Dormer."

It came to him in a flash. Josephine! Of course. This child, for some odd reason, reminded him forcibly of that other Josephine. Was it the background? Was there something about the sawmill, the ancient beech-trees, the green pastures that reminded him of the rectory? Was it the peaceful atmosphere that had prevailed there too? No, it was something else; something stronger. This little girl had the same rare sweetness that belonged to that other Josephine. He remembered.

She smiled at him again; then her stillness galvanised into action and she was away, darting in among the flower-beds. A golden sprite amid the colourful blooms. Rollo sat down, and there was silence broken only by the chug-chug of the sawmill's steam-engine, and the high whine of the circular saws. In a while Don Juan said, "It is a pity, but she will have to leave here. She has to go to school; she will have to mix with children of her own class. But she does not want to go. In summer she is happy doing many things, and in winter she is happy playing on her skis. Even now she has the will of *el viejo*," and he nodded in the old man's direction. The latter was asleep, very peacefully, in the sun. "Yes," continued Don Juan, "she takes after him. She loves Hua-Hum. You know, in the Araucanian language it means 'the deep place.' Appropriate—eh? But not a place to live in. She will learn." He sighed heavily, and said no more on the subject. Before long the launch was ready to take Rollo back on its return journey. When he said good-bye to Don Juan, *el viejo* was still asleep.

Rollo saw the Van Dormers several times after that. He liked Don Juan, and could sympathise with the difficulties for which this *porteño* gentleman with a doctorate in law was in no way fitted to tackle. Moreover, to his surprise, the little girl seemed to take to him. She liked to chatter with him in English, and with her he lost all shyness. But that winter the old man died, and Don Juan left for Buenos Aires with his daughter, leaving a *mayordomo* in charge of the estancia. All the stock was to be sold, it was said, and apparently only the sawmill was to be kept going. Rollo, without consciously admitting it to himself, felt that a warmth had gone out of his life. His visits to Hua-Hum had meant much to him. He had begun to love 'the deep place.' He would miss the way the little girl called him, '*Mister* Rollo.'

II

The years went by. Rollo was promoted manager of one of the Company's huge Sections. He had thousands of head of stock to look after, and the section was the highest in that camp. It was a lonely mountain abode, but Rollo reckoned that he was used to this now. Apart from his work, a new interest had come his way. He had taken up skiing; firstly in order to get about his section more efficiently in winter, and later—when the sport became popular in San Martin—for fun. A hut had been built high on Cerro Chapelco, which was eight thousand feet above the sea. Rollo went there as often as he could, to ski down the magnificent run. The National Park officials had invested in some propaganda extolling the delights of skiing on the Chapelco, and the place had become well known.

So it was that Josephine came back to her loved place, the first time. Don Juan had written to Rollo asking him to look after Josephine if he could. The girl wanted to go to Hua-Hum again, he said, and she wanted to ski on Chapelco. He himself had very little interest in the region now. The sawmill was badly run, and made no money. Anyway, Josephine—she grew more like *el viejo* every day—wished to do these things. Would Don Rollo look after her while she was there?

Of course Rollo agreed, though with misgivings, and when the time came, he was at the bus-station. He had given himself a week's holiday to look after Josephine. Would he regret it? She would be almost grown-up now, and used to going about with good-looking boys. He glared at the passengers as they descended, and there she was. His pulse quickened. Her head was bare, and glowed with golden splendour against the bright background of snow on the hills. She lived up to the promise she had shown five years before. She was fit for a prince.

When she spotted Rollo, she ran to him. "*Mister* Rollo," she cried; "how nice to see you again!" He stared at her. What was it about her? Ah, yes. The first Josephine. She too had had this effect on him, though he had been stupid enough not to appreciate it fully at that age. She smiled at him, and he found his voice. "You've changed," he said; "you've grown up."

They went to one of the up-to-date hotels; there were several in the town now; and, after a good dinner, during which Josephine told him all about St Hilda's College, her English school at Buenos Aires, they retired early. They had decided to take the new National Park launch that made the trip to Hua-Hum next day. "I'm dying to see it," Josephine confided; "but I wonder what it's like now. Father doesn't care about it—he's so wrapped up in politics—and mother never did. I'm sure it's going to wrack and ruin. It is sad. I loved that place."

The trip to Hua-Hum was not a success. Josephine was depressed to see the state into which her old home had deteriorated. The *mayordomo* was decidedly off-hand, and hinted that Don Juan was not paying him enough; that he was thinking of resigning. Rollo had vivid memories of the past. His depression equalled that of Josephine. They were both glad to board the launch later in the day. They looked back with sadness at Hua-Hum as the twin diesels drove the craft at high speed through the placid waters, leaving a great wake that slapped heavily against the rocky shores of 'the deep place.' "I do not want to see it again," said the girl with a sigh. "Not until things have changed."

To compensate in some measure for the disillusion of Hua-Hum, the trip to Cerro Chapelco was full of unexpected incident. Notwithstanding the weather, which had turned bad, Rollo and Josephine set out for the mountain on the following day. With skins strapped to their skis they climbed up through the great beech forest, which was hung all about with old-man's-beard so that it resembled some enchanted wood at the bottom of the ocean. They had started early, but the weather did not improve. It grew worse. When they reached the half-way mark, Rollo, noticing that Josephine was following strongly in his tracks, increased his own pace with the intention of reaching the hut and having a hot drink ready when she came up. In a very short time he crossed the final belt of dwarf antarctic beeches and was onto the high snows. The hut could not be seen, for it was buried. Rollo knew where it was, however, and he had soon dug away enough snow to free the trap-door in the roof. There was no sign of Josephine, but Rollo did not worry. She would follow his tracks, which were plain to see.

Once inside the little hut, he immediately busied himself trying to light the damp stove. But it gave a lot of trouble, and Rollo, immersed in his efforts, forgot about the passage of time. At length, when the fire was crackling merrily, sending long warm shadows round the room, he chanced to glance at his watch. It was over an hour since he had entered the hut. Josephine should have arrived. Something must be wrong. He leapt out of the trap-door, quickly strapped on his skis, and started back on his tracks. Now he knew what was wrong. It had begun to snow, and it was very difficult to distinguish the tracks in the bad light. Despite this, he soon espied a set of ski-tracks, just past the little beeches, bearing left. It was clear that Josephine had lost his trail at this point, and gone on up the mountainside. Hastily he followed. It became more and more difficult for him to distinguish her tracks in the snow. It was getting darker every minute, and snowing more heavily.

Half an hour later, when a cold sweat had broken out all over him, he found her. She was sitting on the snow, frightened and nearly exhausted. He put his arms round her and lifted her up. She clung tightly to him; and, with a sudden constriction in his throat, he saw that she was crying.

"I thought I'd lost you for ever," she sobbed. "I couldn't see my own tracks."

"I'll help you to the hut," he said, patting her awkwardly on the shoulder, for he was much moved. "It's not far. You're safe now." As his arm tightened round her waist to guide her, he realised that although she was grown-up in a way, she was still a child at heart.

Back at the hut, he rubbed her cold hands and feet. He quickly heated the tea for her, and, once she was comfortable, began preparing hot soup. He put practically everything he could think of into the pot, and stirred the mixture vigorously. He was well used to making soups. When Josephine, who was recovered now, tasted it, she said, " This is *good.* What sort of soup is it, anyway ? "

"My sort," he replied; "just mountain soup."

She laughed, and it was good to hear laughter in that buried hut. "I've never tasted anything so good," she said. Rollo smiled; and, looking at him now, Josephine saw something in his face that she had not been aware of before. It had a sort of beauty of its own; it grew on you.

As the bus pulled out of the station some days later with Josephine on board, her last words to him were, "I'll come back some day, just to taste your mountain soup."

III

The outbreak of war affected Rollo much less than it did other people. He volunteered immediately. To him it was second nature to fight; and to fight some real evil would be welcome, compared to the futilities that in recent years he had had to struggle with. He was probably suffering from what old dwellers in the Cordillera call 'cordilleraitis'; a disease contracted by young men who live for too long alone in the mountains. But Rollo did not realise this, and would not have believed it. He was among the first batch of Anglo-Argentine volunteers to leave Buenos Aires.

Rollo was an excellent soldier. Before long he was commissioned and commander of his armoured car. He did well in North Africa, and later in Normandy. He was mentioned in despatches. Then he was wounded on the right cheek, when a grenade exploded and peppered him. This did nothing to improve his looks.

After England, North Africa and France, Buenos Aires, which had not suffered at all during the war, should have held great charms for Rollo. The opposite was the case; he found the city, which in the past he had admired and believed exciting, to be more superficial than ever. The people seemed to him to have no real understanding of the tragic holocaust in Europe, and to care nothing. The entire *porteño* merry-go-round of the federal capital was skating on very thin ice; and, in fact, an obvious dictator, modelling himself on the lines of Hitler and Mussolini, had come to power. Whatever the best elements in Buenos Aires might say, and tear their hair saying it, the people were to blame.

Rollo was in two minds whether or not to return at once to England, with the intention of going on to Australia. He had made good Australian friends in the desert, and that country had always appealed to the stockman in him. But '*La vida te lo dirá*,' the future is indeed not ours to see, and fate had a little trick up her sleeve for Rollo. He was having a drink one evening in a café on Calle Florida when he suddenly caught sight of Don Juan Van Dormer. He went over to the other's table at once, and was greeted with tremendous warmth in the true Argentine fashion. Presently, having asked many pertinent questions about the war, Don Juan said, "And you, my dear Rollo, what will you do now?"

"I am thinking of going to Australia," replied Rollo bluntly.

The good man was aghast. "What!" he exclaimed; "have you no more use for your *own* country? Have you forgotten the Cordillera? Have you no more interest in the deep place, Hua-Hum?"

Rollo pricked up his ears. So far everything had been so shallow. Hua-Hum. Yes, in a way, he had forgotten. "Six years is a long time," he said thoughtfully; "but I could never really forget the Cordillera."

"Would you go back there?"

He pondered the idea. Yes, he might. But not as an employee of a Company. He felt, now, that he wanted to start some private enterprise. He said as much. Whereupon Don Juan thumped the table triumphantly, and exclaimed, "I have the very thing for you. A proposal."

"Go ahead," said Rollo.

"I will sell you my sawmill," returned Don Juan. Seeing that Rollo was now keenly attentive, he went on: "The terrible dictator that we have ruling the country—I am of the opposition, you know—has expropriated our estancia down there. We remain only with the sawmill, but I have no further interest in the region. The sawmill is badly run, and I am a poor man. I offer to sell you all the machinery and installations, and the right to the concessions." He named a reasonable sum. Rollo was thinking of Hua-Hum, picturing it in his mind's eye. He had known peace there, and a warmth that he had not forgotten. "What has happened to your daughter?" he said. "Married to some decent chap, I hope."

Don Juan shook his head. "She is busy," he said, "earning her living. She has become a fashion model, a mannequin. It is very remunerative. I think she has lost all interest in Hua-Hum, especially since the camp went. Josephine always loved animals." He said it very sadly.

"What about your timber concessions," put in Rollo, breaking an awkward silence. "Are they safe?"

"They are safe. The dictator wants our camp for pasturing the mules of the regiment that he is sending to ' protect ' the frontier. He has no interest in trees."

"I see," said Rollo. He was thinking that he would have to borrow money for this. His father might help, and perhaps the bank. "In a few days' time I'll give you my answer," he said, adding, "by the way, can I see Josephine then?"

Don Juan looked at him. "She is away in Mar del Plata modelling beach wear and swim-suits," he replied with a frown. "She won't be back till autumn."

A few days later, having discussed the matter with his father and with the bank, Rollo arranged to meet Don Juan again. By the end of that meeting he had become the new owner of the old sawmill in Hua-Hum.

There is a little lake, set in the mountains like the lowest gem of a triangular-shaped pendant, that lies to the south of and at right-angles to lakes Lacar and Nonthué. This is Lake Queñi. A shallow river joins it with Lake Nonthué. Another river, the Queñi, flows into Lake Queñi half-way along its western shore. This river has its source in the Lipela range, five miles to the westward, the range that in 1903 was declared by Sir Thomas Holditch's boundary commission to be the true frontier between Argentina and Chile. This was the area in which Rollo's concessions stood, and high on the western range lay the Lipela Pass.

Rollo's gang of peons, mostly Chilenos, worked for him with a will. They respected him, and they said that here was an excellent *patrón*, who took a personal interest in their welfare. It was a pity that he was *un feo*; for his was a lonely life and he would make a good husband to any woman. To see him handling the bullocks told them this; for the Chilenos knew that to be a good man with bullocks required great patience—like a husband with his wife.

Rollo enjoyed the work, for he was still a stockman at heart. It pleased him to see the bullocks move those huge logs on steep slopes so deftly, by straining, and backing and sidling, heaving mightily on the great chain attached to their yokes. The bullocks were the vanguard for the double-differential trucks that picked up the great *rollizos* which those tireless animals brought down from inaccessible places.

The trucks—bearing such names as *el Puma*, or *el Jabalí* (the wild boar)—continued with the work, thrusting their blunt snouts along rough and narrow tracks, bucking and bouncing until they were able to dump their enormous loads of beech-logs into Lake Queñi. There, if the wind blew fair, they drifted slowly, like lazy hippos, to the northern end, where lumbermen with their attendant bullocks, as well trained as elephants in the teak forests of Burma and just as valuable, dragged the logs out of the water. Slowly but surely they were loaded onto other trucks which, in turn, bucked and bounced over the terrible tracks to Lake Nonthué, to dump their loads into the water again. Now, however, they were close to journey's end:

presently with many a "Aha! Aha!" from Chileno drivers, and much wielding of long bamboo goads, they would be hauled out of the lake by the bullocks and into the sawmill yard, to be neatly carved into beams, planks, boards, slats and fence-posts. Finally, emerging in these different forms, they would be stacked tidily, looking, from up the hillside, like new villages conjured up by some mountain Maskelyn.

When sufficient seasoning had been done, they would be loaded onto big flat-bottomed barges (*chatas*), and towed by launches to the township of San Martin; or, if the west wind blew strongly, vast square sheets of canvas would be rigged and the *chatas* would sail down the lake majestically, looking for all the world like exotic eastern junks. Lake Lacar was the lifeline of the sawmills; for there was no other way of getting the timber to the town and to the inland markets.

To Rollo it was a good life. In late autumn and winter, when the tracks from lake to lake became impassable and the lakes themselves very rough, the felling of those forest giants would begin. The long supple two-man saws would sing in the forest; the many axes would strike and thud as the Chilenos plied them expertly. As always, the brave bullocks were there, to tug and haul. Rollo, watching these activities day by day, would reason that in time these willing beasts he admired so much would be replaced by tractors and other machines; and he would regret the thought of their passing.

Rollo lived in a small log-house hard by the sawmill at Hua-Hum. The 'deep place' was keeping pace with the times. There was a police station and a customs building; there were several sawmills. The old Van Dormer estancia house had been taken over by the National Park and sold later, at a considerable profit, to some enterprising people who, realising that every year the area was becoming more popular as a tourist resort, turned the old wooden building into a first-rate restaurant and *hosteria*. They already visualised the many hundreds of tourists who, during the summer season, would make the excursion from San Martin to Hua-Hum in the National Park's launches.

Rollo regretted the change. He did not like the *turistas*: they seemed unable to differentiate between him and one of his scruffiest peons. Admittedly his dress was strictly practical, and somewhat soiled. Moreover, he wore a beard, which grew rather scabrously on the wounded side of his face. He may well have resembled Edward Lear's 'old man of the border, who lived in considerable disorder,' except that he had a tidy mind. As for the *señoritas* who visited his sawmill, nosing round, they would glance at him and hastily look away. "*Que hombre deo!*" they would whisper, when almost out of earshot: what an ugly man! "*Quien será?*" Who could it be? But Rollo did not enlighten them; he was impervious to all that by this time. Or so he thought.

IV

The years went by. The dictator was deposed, and a more democratic government took over; which did not affect Rollo much. His sawmill had done well; he had paid back the money he had borrowed, and he was making a good though modest living. His *capataz*—a northern Italian immigrant who had much experience with sawmills, and who would burst into song on the least provocation—was loyal and trusty. Rollo was relieved, however, to see the withdrawal of the mountain regiment which had occupied land that had belonged to the Van Dormer family, and which, having trained its mule-drawn guns on Chile, sat back and drank *maté* while *bandidos* laughed on nearby high ridges.

One day, late in the summer, Rollo was surprised to receive a letter from Josephine Van Dormer. He had not seen her, or heard from her, since before the war. Her letter was short and to the point. She wanted to come back to Hua-Hum; and, in particular, for private reasons, she dearly wished to visit the Lipela Pass. Would Rollo accompany her? His first reaction was a feeling of intense irritation. Why did the girl want to go traipsing off to that remote pass? It was tough going. Then he remembered the Chapelco adventure; she had done well. Moreover, he had to admit to himself that he too had often wanted to visit that pass. He wrote telling Josephine that he would be pleased to go. It was only after he had posted the letter that he realised he had written to her as though she was still a teenager, whereas, by this time—and the thought was something of a shock—she would be twenty-seven.

He went to San Martin to meet her. He recalled vividly the last time he had done this, the impression she had made on him then. What would she be like now? The bus drew in with a hiss from its air-brakes and a cloud of dust. The excited tourists descended stiffly, one by one. He stared at them furiously, and then he saw her. As before he was conscious of an untoward quickening in his breathing, and a strange sensation that he had always known this lovely woman. She did not resemble the golden-headed girl very much. She had matured, and looked worldly-wise. She had great poise, and she was as smart as paint. Her hands were well manicured, her nails long. 'My God!' he thought, 'and she wants to march to the Lipela Pass, the toughest going in this Cordillera. She can't have changed, despite the lipstick.'

The lady glanced round with mixed feelings. How extraordinarily familiar everything seemed. But where was he? As Rollo advanced rather diffidently towards her she recognised him. 'How grey he's got!' she thought, with a sudden catch in her heart; how sad he looks. What a lovely face he really has. She ran to meet him, and grasped his outstretched hand. "*Mister* Rollo," she cried, and the odd form of address came out as easily as it had done when she was little; "how *glad* I am to see you again." She smiled into his ugly, scarred, bewildered face.

'She hasn't changed at that,' he said to himself, and his heart sang. 'She's the same girl beneath all that make-up.'

On the National Park's launch they hardly spoke to each other. When he was not looking, she studied his face. Poor face, so scarred and lined now. How often she had thought of it; so different from the faces in Buenos Aires—those leering young men that glanced at her in a certain way when she showed off the models; who hung about on the other side of the street and, when she left Madame Jacques' where she worked for her daily bread, tried to 'date' her. How she loathed them and the entire *porteño* set-up. How she hated the salons, the hushed atmosphere, the over-dressed old women who despised her for the work she did, and the too-elegant old men who were so frightfully knowing. But if things went the way she hoped on this trip, she'd soon be rid of all the old horrors. Thank goodness she had managed to save a fair sum of money.

When the girl herself was quite unaware of his scrutiny, Rollo would search her beautiful face. He was puzzled. How could it be that this girl was still single. An unhappy love affair? That would be it. Well, perhaps this holiday in the mountains would do her good. She would go back to Buenos Aires refreshed and more likely to fall in love with some decent eligible young fellow. He sighed heavily, caught himself doing so, and surreptitiously turned it into a huge yawn.

Hua-Hum depressed Josephine. She stayed at the *hosteria* that had been her old home, and there were ghosts in every corner. She was glad when, a few days later, Rollo said he was ready to make the trip to the Lipela Pass. The weather was fine and hot for the Cordillera as they set out. At first Rollo, who was carrying the bulk of the food and baggage, went at a slow pace. The girl, however, seemed able to keep step with him easily. He soon increased his pace, therefore; and, after a gruelling first day's march along a path that reached for the skies and then for the valleys, never remaining horizontal for more than a few paces, they reached the Queñi River. Here they camped. Rollo was surprised that she had done so well, and made some remark about it. She smiled. "Modelling," she said, "is very hard work. I have to keep fit. I'm on my feet all day. I suppose I walk miles and miles in those salons. But it's tiring in quite a different way to what we've done today. Not a healthy tiredness. Besides, just to be in the forest and mountains is a tonic; and, you know, your mountain soup does wonders to uplift my spirit."

It took them three days to reach the Pass. The trail wound steeply all the way, following the Queñi River which gradually developed into a stream and then became a mere ribbon of water dashing down a gorge.

They gained height steadily; until, at last, they were traversing the high forest in the vicinity of the Lipela Pass. Josephine, to Rollo's surprise, had brought good maps with her. When, tired and weary, they decided to camp by a gurgling waterfall that was the source of the Queñi River, and she produced the map, Rollo remarked, " I don't really understand what you wanted to come up here for. It's beautiful, of course, but . . ."

She smiled enigmatically, but said nothing. Rollo, who respected other people's reserve as much as he would wish them to respect his, did not pursue the matter. That evening, after he had concocted his usual mountain soup and they were sitting by the fire, she said, " Tomorrow I want to go over there," pointing south-west. "According to this map, and it is absolutely up-to-date, the border takes a curve there. The high meadows there lie *inside* Argentina. The Chilenos, you know, take little notice of the frontiers fixed by Holditch—at least unofficially. I don't blame them. Have a look at this map." Rollo was puzzled. "Why are you so interested in those meadows?" he said. She made no reply ; and, at that moment, a humming-bird appeared and hovered for some seconds in front of them. The girl laughed. "It thinks you're a flower," she said, glad of an excuse to change the subject. Rollo blushed.

Early next morning they started towards the meadows. As they climbed through the steep forest, crushing wild strawberries underfoot, they could hear cries ahead, followed by the lowing of cattle. "Sounds like men mustering a herd," said Rollo.

"I thought as much," panted Josephine. Rollo's puzzlement increased. Soon the meadows came in sight. It was a perfect place, lush green grasslands surrounded by craggy spires. There was excellent feed for many cattle. The cries came clearly now. Presently some Chilean *guazos* appeared out of the forest, driving high-spirited steers. "I must speak to them," said the girl. "It's important."

She hurried up to a salient point, and hailed the oncoming men. One of them, a big swarthy fellow wearing goatskin chaps, with his spurred high heels jutting out of wooden snout-shaped stirrups, galloped up in that quick way so characteristic of the Chilean. Rollo saw her speak to this man as he sat easily on his tough long-maned mountain pony, and thought what a picturesque scene this was; how attractive she looked even in her clumsy mountaineering rig. He would never forget it. Josephine came back. "I was right," she said; "he says—that big Chileno —that they always pasture cattle on these meadows. He maintains that they have a right to do so; that this is Chileno country. That's what I wanted to know." She would say no more.

Four days later, back in Hua-Hum, very tired and dreadfully dusty, her feet sore, her hair looking like the wrath of God, her nails broken, Josephine did not resemble the immaculate girl who had stepped off the bus a fortnight before. However, a bath and a change of clothes soon improved her appearance. There was no need for her to *feel* better. She was happier than she had been for many a day.

She asked Rollo over to dinner at the *hosteria* that night. When coffee came, she said, "Now I'll tell you what it's all about. You have been so patient. My father, you know, was a staunch opponent of the dictator, and he suffered for it, poor dear. But when the new government took over, they did not forget those who had helped depose the dictator, and they gave us back our camp that had been expropriated. Well, father is not much interested. He never was, and he wants to travel. But I am. Father says I'm like *el viejo*, and he has turned the place over to me. The camp extends right up to the border west of Hua-Hum, and then south along the Lipela range to those grasslands that I was so interested in. As you know, access to them from this side is very difficult. You see? Those Chilenos are pasturing their cattle on *our* camp! Then they take them back over the pass into Chile, which is easier country. I suspected that they would start doing this by the end of summer—we have always known that this sort of thing went on—but father wasn't keen to follow it up. I am; and *el viejo*, in his time, was too. Obviously the regiment that was stationed here did nothing to stop them. Whoever has the run of this camp will have to be somebody who doesn't mind an occasional border dispute, and even a clash with the *bandidos*, but who will also be liked and respected by the Chileans. I am only a woman. It will take a strong man to manage the difficulties." She smiled at him. "I would like you to be that man, *Mister* Rollo," she said happily.

Rollo stared. To start up a new herd; to build yards and corrals; to create a new settlement; to construct *volteadas*, log stockades, round the high grasslands in order to frustrate the Chilean *bandidos* and, at the same time, to uphold the King's award. What an enterprise! It appealed to every instinct in him. For a moment his spirit soared. He was a realist, however, and he came back to mother earth. "I am sorry," he said gruffly, almost fiercely, "but I can't do it." He felt shy and awkward with her again.

Her eyes showed her dismay. "Why not?" she cried. "You could combine it with your logging, since it's all in the same area. You could even breed your own bullocks."

Breed his own bullocks. Specialise in a type that would be ideal for Cordillera logging, that could never be deposed by machines. The temptation was almost overwhelming. But . . .

He took time before replying. He could not look into those blue eyes as he said, "I'm too set in my ways. You might say that I am thoroughly in step with myself now; I could not manage for a woman. I'd be out of step all the time."

They took the National Park's launch next morning. Geronimo, the Italian *capataz*, accompanied them to help with the luggage. The bus departed for railhead at midday. As the passengers began mounting, Rollo took her hand. "Do you remember," he said softly, "what you said to me the last time I saw you off on this bus? 'I'll come back some day to taste your mountain soup,' you said. Well, you've done that; and I think you enjoyed it. When you find a manager for your estancia, perhaps you might come back again. If you do, I might be able to give you some more mountain soup." He smiled at her; and, despite himself, there was mischief in his smile.

Her slender brown hand twisted in his grip, and the remains of her long nails dug into his palm. Before he knew what has happening, her left arm was round his shoulders, and her soft cheek was pressed against his scarred and shaggy one. "You *idiot*," she whispered shakily; "don't you *know*? If you won't manage for a woman, how will you manage for a wife?" With that she broke away, and jumped up the steps.

Rollo never saw the bus go. He did not see anything at all. As Geronimo remarked later to his cronies, "*Amigos*, I swear by all the saints that he was ugly no longer; at that moment he was wonderfully *buenmozo*." That good man knew that in every element of happiness there is an element of sadness; that life will ever show that what has to be, will be. And since he could express these sentiments only with song, he sang:

> '*Que será, será ;*
> *Será lo que debe ser ;*
> *La vida te lo dirá ;*
> *Que será, será.*'

Which, to his own satisfaction, clinched the matter.

MISSIONARY STEW

BY GEORGE LAUDER

COLONEL HOOPER wiped his chubby face for the third time, dropped his handkerchief, its brilliance now dampened to more sober colours, and leaned back in his chair.

"You should remember," he advised me, "that less than half a century ago the askari's parents, and probably Fulani's as well, were dancing round pots of missionary stew. And," he added thoughtfully, "that stew-pot is still a fact, still a symbol . . . for many things!"

I sank even further into my already deep gloom.

He bent forward again to look at a slim file in front of him. "I see," he continued with a hint of disapproval in his voice, "that you're not a volunteer."

"No, sir!"

Indeed, I was not. The evil fate which had whisked me from Germany to Accra had not been my choice. A list of names and a pin in the hands of some frivolous staff officer could have caused it; or, more likely, and this in part was a reason for my present depression, a wicked intrigue between my regiment and the War Office.

The Colonel looked up at me again. "Have you ever served with African troops before?" he asked.

"No, sir."

His mouth twisted sardonically. "Then this will be quite an experience for you!"

"Am I," I asked desperately, "to be the only European in my company?"

"Not quite. There's C.Q.M.S. Hancock—which reminds me, you'd better check your stores pretty carefully. I'm not too happy about those stores. But you'll find Samuel Fulani's not a bad officer. I'm sure you'll grow to like him."

His last sentence rang in my mind as I drove the ten or fifteen miles between Accra and Teshi, where my new company was on detachment, and my gloom deepened. The road, slightly to my surprise, was macadamed, and ran beside the coast. The prospect was not unpleasing: palm-trees, low hills bluely distant in one direction; golden sands, more palm-trees and an aquamarine sea in the other. Romantic enough, had I been in the mood. But I was not in the mood: in being posted to command a company of troops, of whom I had no experience, with the assistance of only one officer, and he an African, and a possibly dishonest Quartermaster-Sergeant, I felt I had been put upon. I looked at my the Italian *capataz*, accompanied them to help with the luggage. The bus departed for railhead at midday. As the passengers began mounting, Rollo took her hand. "Do you remember," he said softly, "what you said to me the last time I saw you off on this bus? 'I'll come back some day to taste your mountain soup,' you said. Well, you've done that; and I think you enjoyed it. When you find a manager for your estancia, perhaps you might come back again. If you do, I might be able to give you some more mountain soup." He smiled at her; and, despite himself, there was mischief in his smile.

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"How much farther?" I asked.

"Urgh?" he said.

Frantically I tried to remember what the Colonel had told me about the language problem.

"Hausa is the official language of the Frontier Force," he had said, "but the lingua franca is a form of pidgin English, of which the best example I can give is the Lord's Prayer. It goes something like this: Our Fader, You be for up, You be fine, fi-i-ine Fella. You come for be our King, I do Your orders same below same for up. Today gib me plenty, ple-e-enty chop. You do good for my enemy, I no be pleased . . . and so on. You'll soon pick it up."

I tried again. "How many miles be for barracks?" I asked.

"Urgh?"

I searched the pages of my Hausa Grammar with trembling fingers, but fortunately a collection of buildings at that moment came into view.

"Dey be *giddas*," remarked my driver, making his first almost intelligible communication.

"Urgh?" I replied.

He looked round at me sharply and his eyes momentarily gleamed—there was no doubt of it—with intelligence. His blubber lips split apart to expose file-sharpened teeth.

"Ho ! " he chortled. " You be funny man, sah! Ho, ho!"

Mutually pleased by this appreciation of my simple humour, we swept between two white pillars and drew up on the edge of a sandy space. Round huts with conical thatched roofs surrounded us, like a ring of toadstools, and a line of soldiers dressed in red fezzes, red waistcoats, red cummerbunds, shorts, long black puttees, and no boots, stood rigidly still in the middle of the sand. In front of the troops an African officer in bush hat, Sam Browne, khaki jacket and shorts, long black puttees, and boots, flashed a sword. Mystified, I got out of my Land-Rover.

"D. Company, —th Battalion, The Gold Coast Regiment," barked the officer, "pre-sent arms!"

I looked round wildly for a general, or a brigadier at least. But there was no one. The compliment was unlawfully aimed at me.

"Slope arms!" continued the officer. "Order arms!"

The arms drill was quite good, I noted. Then the officer stumped over to me.

"Lieutenant Fulani, sir," he reported. " Parade ready for your inspection, sir."

Feeling faintly royal, I permitted him to lead me past the black faces, all to my untrained eyes as alike as Chinamen are not, and return me to the neighbourhood of my Land-Rover. Then, led by him, the company marched past me with a precision that was creditable, very creditable indeed. I felt my chest swell. Fulani peeled away from the marching column and conducted me to the only rectangular building in sight—the Company Offices, he told me. Standing before it was a man whose narrow eyes and long nose reminded me of a ferret. His mouth at that moment was disfigured by a cynical sneer.

"C.Q.M.S. Hancock," Fulani said, introducing him.

Hancock clasped my hand with a sweaty palm, pulled me a little to one side and warped his sneer into a soapy smirk.

"I'm sorry about that 'Present,' sir," he whispered. "But he would have it, sir."

I decided I was not going to like this man, and was relieved when Fulani suggested a cool drink.

The officers' mess was a few hundred yards from the camp, and I discovered that, though we normally shared it with a neighbouring training establishment, we now had it to ourselves. Fulani, with his hat off, began to stand out from the jumble of my arrival as an individual. His nose was thin enough to be called aquiline, and his lips, though full, were well-shaped. The Colonel had told me that his ancestors must have migrated from Kano, as his name suggested; but his woolly hair and black skin showed that he was also of the Coast. He looked at me with a direct gaze that was almost Arab in its pride, and I found myself immediately liking him.

"The Colonel doesn't like 'treating' in mess," he said solemnly. "But I may offer a newly-joined officer a drink. What will you have, sir?"

His eyes were veiled defensively as he made the offer, and I guessed that on a similar occasion in the past someone had snubbed him.

"Beer, Samuel," I replied. "God bless you!"

He relaxed and his body fell into a looser, more graceful posture. Then the drinks came and as we clinked glasses he grinned, and I knew that my instinctive use of his first name had been right.

"By Jove, sir, I was ready for that! How are you liking this country?"

I gave him a revised edition of my first impressions, and we chatted. He spoke English nearly perfectly, with an accent so faint as to be almost unnoticeable, and using a vocabulary that was at least as extensive as mine and a syntax that was better. At length he started to fidget, then looked at his watch.

"By Jove! My wife will be waiting!" he exclaimed. His eyes became veiled again and his bearing stiffened. "Sir . . ." He paused, then went on with a little rush, "The Mess will be empty tonight: my wife and I were wondering if you'd care to dine with us?"

"Why, thank you. I'd love to."

This time he expressed his relief with an audible sigh.

I spent the rest of that day settling into my quarters, a rondavel similar to those of my askari, and in the evening Samuel came for me. I looked at my watch; he was earlier than I had expected, since I had only that moment come to the mess myself, hoping I might snatch time for a drink before he arrived. I suggested that we have one together. He took out his cigarette-case, a cheap alloy one, fidgeted with it, then thrust it back into his pocket.

"Let's have one at home, sir," he said explosively.

His car was small, an old model, but well polished. I squeezed in beside him. He let in the gear with a spine-wrenching jerk and we rattled down the road at what was obviously the car's maximum speed. From time to time, to my alarm, as there was at least six inches play in the steering, he took a hand from the wheel to point to some moon-lit landmark with quick, nervous gestures. For him, evidently, this was to be no casual meal. He braked with a jerk before a small bungalow, separated from the road by a patch of neat garden.

"Rose is a great gardener," he said with pride.

Rose Fulani was waiting at the door. I think I had been expecting to find in her something slender and graceful with wild, shy eyes, like the picture of a Somali girl I had once seen, and was therefore disappointed by what I saw. She was short, dressed in the 'separates' then fashionable, and she had brushed and anointed her woolly hair so that its ringlets shone; but her round, thick-lipped face did not seem to me much different from the faces of the women of Accra, whom I had seen crowded into the ramshackle buses which they called 'Mammy Wagons.' Later I was to recognise in her doe-like eyes and high, slightly bulging forehead a beauty peculiar to her race—for in that sense the saying is true: 'absence makes the dark grow blonder.'

"We have so been looking forward to meeting you," she said.

She preceded me into a tiny living-room—also their dining-room; for in one-half of it I saw a small table, highly polished, laid with glasses and cutlery for three people.

"I'm going to give you our national dish, ground-nut chop," she continued. "I hope you won't mind."

I made a polite denial, and looked at her sharply, suspecting her of affectation. And yet her English was as good as her husband's, though more accented, and her manner as natural and gracious as that of a European hostess to a stranger. I felt I was taking part in a play; but a play which for them, at least, was deep with meaning.

They gave me sherry before the meal and wine with it, both South African; but the ground-nut stew, a paste of the nuts, mashed yam and chicken, was delicious. We talked about military things and world affairs, on which they were as informed as I—not saying much, I admit. Inevitably, the independence of the colony, then distant a year or two, was mentioned. Fulani made a, to me, memorable remark.

"Nkrumah will be able to govern us," he said. "But it won't be democracy. We won't be capable of that for another two or three generations."

"Why?" I asked.

He shrugged and his mouth twisted wryly. "You'll see," he replied laconically.

The next morning, I discovered to my horror that I was expected to take Company Orders without any respite for adjustment. I found Samuel standing stiffly behind my chair and affecting to ignore my pleading look. Resignedly, I took my place and ostentatiously slapped my Hausa Grammar on the desk to show that I meant business.

"Excuse me, sir," said Samuel.

"Yes?"

"I think you'll find that book a waste of time, sir. I'm the only man in your company who can speak Hausa."

"Good heavens! Tell me," I asked curiously, "how many languages *can* you speak?"

"English, French, German, Hausa, Fanti and Twee, sir. And a few local dialects, of course."

I gasped, now even more convinced that the Colonel's crack about 'missionary stew' could not apply to Samuel.

I dropped the grammar into the waste-paper basket and looked at the charge-sheet. There was only one case, and that an apparently simple one concerning untidy kit. The prisoner was marched in, I heard the evidence and then invited him to defend himself.

"Sah!" he said. "Bad man, he steal my drum, sah! My ju-ju be for dat drum, sah! My fader ju-ju be for dat drum, sah! My fader-fader ju-ju be for dat drum, sah! My——"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted hastily before he reached Adam. "It—er—it be old drum?"

"O-o-old drum, sah! I no be fit for work widout drum, sah! My ju-ju——"

"March out!" I exclaimed.

I turned to Samuel. "This drum business," I asked. "Do I take any notice of it?"

"If he'd been speaking the truth," he replied seriously, "I would have dismissed the case. But he's lying. I don't think he's lost the drum."

"Oh. How do you know he's lying?"

"By his eyes. How do you know with a European, sir?"

Hancock's face came to my mind. "Why, by a sort of shifty look, I suppose," I replied.

"Exactly sir. In any case, I happen to know he bought that drum in the market a month ago. By the way, I think you should see our scale of punishments—they're probably different from what you've been used to, and we need some men to get the rifle-range ready." He handed me a board.

I read the list. "And I had thought," I gulped, "of giving him two or three days' confinement to barracks!"

He laughed indulgently. "That wouldn't be any use, sir, just now. None of the men dare go out."

"Ye gods! Why not?"

"There's been a case of 'chopping'—cannibalism—in the village, sir.

The top of the skull makes a ritual drinking-cup and it's said they want one more."

In a subdued voice I ordered the accused to be marched in again, pronounced him guilty and awarded him a punishment which made me feel like a sadist.

"Will you take over the stores now, sir?" Samuel asked. "The Colonel is worried about our stores," he continued as we walked to them. "I can't understand it, because they're clean, and Colour-Sergeant Hancock is very honest."

In this matter, I thought with a sudden re-inflation of my ego, I might be able to show my superiority.

Hancock was waiting for us, not quite bowing and washing his hands.

"How are you getting on, sir?" he asked with a smirk. "Expect it's a bit of a shock, sir. But you'll be all right in my stores, sir. *This* side of the company's in order, sir!"

The stores were indeed very neat. For an hour I counted things, and finally came to a pile of what appeared to be red bunting. Hancock coughed and fidgeted.

"Cummerbunds, sir," he said. "One hundred and twenty of them, sir." He ran a finger rapidly down them. "I've tied them in bundles of ten to make for ease of counting, sir."

By now I was utterly bored and inclined to take him at his word. I ran my hand over the bundles: they appeared to be correct. That made the store in perfect order. I felt a twinge of unease. It was the first store I had ever come across that was not deficient in *some* small respect.

"Let's have a look at one of them," I said, choosing a cloth at random.

I spread it out. It seemed to me very narrow.

"That one's only half width, Colour-Sergeant ! " Samuel said aghast.

Hancock kept silence while I examined the stuff closely. One side had no hem and had obviously been cut. Now I inspected them all and discovered that a quarter of their number had been similarly treated. Then I re-examined a bundle of blankets which Hancock had alleged to be new and untouched. A few at the bottom of these had also been operated on and then cunningly folded. I looked silently at Hancock.

"They were correct when Mr Fulani checked them last week, sir," he protested.

"Did you examine them?" I asked, looking at Samuel.

I noticed with pity that his normally dry forehead was beaded with sweat; for him this might mean financial disaster.

"I did not, sir," he replied. "I only counted them."

"I checked them before that, sir," Hancock interposed quickly. "They were correct then, sir. It beats me, sir. Can't understand it, sir."

I looked at him straightly. He returned my gaze for a moment or so, then his eyes shifted away. I felt sure he was lying, but I could not prove it. I decided to take the matter to the Colonel.

At Battalion Orderly Room I examined Hancock's personal file, and found tucked away in it a confidential letter which must have been overlooked over a period of years. 'This man,' I read, 'should NOT be employed in any connection with stores.' With this in my hand, I went to see the Colonel. He summoned the Quartermaster, who agreed cautiously that he would be able to make good the deficiencies over a period of time.

"Hancock will have to go," said the Colonel. "Do you think you can manage with his understudy?"

At that time each European warrant-officer had an African shadow, learning the job. I was willing to try Hancock's on his own, and later was justified. But I gained a more immediate advantage in Samuel's respect, which made it now mutual; and the whisper of my alleged cunning spread through my company and earned for me, earlier than I deserved, that loving loyalty—there is no other description—which fills with lasting delight the memories of many officers who have served with the askari.

I began to enjoy myself. We were in the full tide of the training cycle. I went for marches—long, long marches in appalling heat which left me exhausted at the end of the day—the only tired man in my company. But I became very fit, and I can say with pride that in the end I could endure what they endured. Then the time for the annual Battalion Rifle Meeting came round.

I discovered that Samuel was an excellent shot, and I myself was quite competent. So between us we built up a team which I thought might easily win. A few days before the meeting I led the team onto the range for a final series of practices. We began with a simple Application. After the first few shots had been fired an altercation at one end of the firing-point distracted me, and I found the man on Number 2 target expostulating.

"Corporal Azuri, sah, he go for my *gidda*, sah!" he explained.

Corporal Azuri, on Number 1 target, was a good but sometimes erratic shot. I had known him fire on somebody else's target before.

"Corporal Azuri, you aim for *gidda*," I ordered sharply.

"Dis rifle hab ju-ju, sah," he protested.

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed irritably. "Aim for *gidda*, one time!"

He faced the target again, took careful aim and fired. A bull was signalled on Number 2 target. He looked up at me and his expression said plainly: I told you so.

"Here, give it to me," I said.

I took his place, saw the figure 1 above my sights, took aim and fired. An inner was signalled on Number 2 target. I swore, checked my aim, and fired again. An outer was signalled on Number 2 target. Frantically I reloaded, and this time aimed at the left-hand edge of Number 1 target. A flag was waved in front of Number 2 target—a miss. I looked round suspiciously, expecting to see grinning black faces, but they were all watching me sympathetically, even Samuel.

"You try," I told him.

A strange look came into his eyes. "No, sir," he said firmly. "That rifle has a ju-ju. The Q.M. will change it, sir."

"Good heavens, will he?"

To my astonishment, I found he was right.

"Got a ju-ju, has it?" the Quartermaster said in a matter-of-fact voice. "All right, I'll exchange it."

"Ye gods! Aren't you going to test it? There must be something wrong with it, man."

"If I fired that rifle from a clamp it would be found to be accurate."

"But, damn it, I fired the thing myself."

He looked at me blandly. "You must be suggestible," he said.

I gave up.

However, Corporal Azuri's new rifle was ju-juless, and we won the competition.

After our triumph, I insisted that Samuel should come back to the mess with me and celebrate. After a time the alcohol effected a curious change in his features: a veil seemed to slide aside, and his eyes became wilder. But I was too 'tiddly' at the time to notice this except in retrospect, and the episode of the rifle still puzzled me.

"Look here, Samuel," I said, "this rifle business—you're a Christian, aren't you?"

"Methodist."

"Well then?"

"There are powers about which you white men know little."

This was the first time I had ever heard him refer to Europeans by the colour of their skin, but I let it pass.

"Yes, yes," I said. "But surely *you* don't believe in all that rot?"

"I am *ngaa*," he replied solemnly.

"And what might that be?"

He leaned nearer to me and began to speak in a hushed, earnest voice. I learned of an esoteric sect of magicians, who, he said, by their magical ceremonies could cause an arrow to kill a man a thousand miles away; could give a man power to change his outward appearance, to walk up walls like a fly if he wished; could save a man from death by cursing. Then he gripped my arm.

"It's said," he whispered, looking fearfully from side to side, "that Kwame Nkrumah has the power to assume the shape of any man, and for this reason we must be careful when he comes to rule us, for who knows he may not assume the shape of a friend when we are speaking ill of him?"

"But why are *you* learning these things?" I gasped.

"So that I can protect my soldiers in battle," he replied simply.

My mind reeled with thoughts of a strange form of warfare as I put myself to bed that night, and for the first time since I had arrived in the country, I slept with my windows shut and my door double-locked, for I seemed to hear the sinister rattle of jungle drums. Our veneer may be thicker than theirs, but it is only a thousand years deep, and the ancient panic lurks under it, ready to pounce.

But Samuel was his normal civilised self the next morning, and I determined never again to refer to such matters. I ought to have known by then, living so closely to the askari as I did, that such a decision was worse than useless.

The Colonel telephoned me that morning.

"I'm sending the battalion running team to you to get them away from the city flesh-pots," he said. "Sergeant Fara-Fara will be in charge of them. He's a good man, but I want you to oversee them."

There was to be a big cross-country race in Accra in about a month's time, with teams from battalions in Nigeria and Sierra Leone competing, as well as from the Gold Coast. Our team was quoted as the favourite this year; but we had dangerous rivals in a Nigerian battalion, who had won the race last year and were known to be determined to win it again by hook or by crook. For this reason, I decided to neglect my other duties a little and concentrate on the team's training. But I did not have to worry, because Sergeant Fara-Fara, a small, wiry man from the Northern Territories, showed such drive and efficiency that really I had little to do. Everything went well, until the teams from the other battalions began to gather in the neighbourhood of Accra. Then a day or two before the race I visited our men in the huts we had put aside for them. Instead of giggling and chatter, the sign of happy askari which I had grown to expect, I was greeted by silence, broken by a few muted voices. As I came among them they shambled dispiritedly to their feet, and the aura of depression struck me with an almost physical impact. I was horrified. I knew them well enough by now to realise they could never win in this state. I questioned Sergeant Fara-Fara, but he only shrugged and shook his head dolefully. In desperation I summoned Samuel.

"For God's sake," I told him, "try to find out what's wrong."

"I know what's wrong," he replied. "They've heard that the Nigerians have put a ju-ju on them."

"Oh, *no*!" I almost screamed. "Well, what are we going to do about it?"

"Put a counter ju-ju on the Nigerians, sir."

In spite of our talk in the past, this was too much for me. I looked at him suspiciously. His lips were lifted in a slight, Jeeves-like smile, but his eyes were serious, and with some indignation I realised that *I* was the object of his amusement, not the preposterous situation.

"Very well," I muttered. "Fix it."

"It may be a bit expensive, sir."

"Spend anything you like!" I exclaimed recklessly. "But make them happy again."

He went to work rapidly, for the following morning, when I visited the team again, they were laughing and chattering, apparently full of confidence.

I sought out Samuel.

"Tell me," I ordered.

He looked about him cautiously then reverently withdrew from his breast pocket a dirty cotton bag, and extracted from it a rusty darning-needle.

"We are to bury this," he whispered, "at the critical bend of the course, on the inner side where runners must pass over it—unless they've been warned." His eyes narrowed. "Our team has been warned, sir."

"H'm," I said dubiously. "Well, anyway it's done their morale a power of good—how much did it cost?"

"Ten pounds—if we win. If we lose it'll cost nothing."

"*Ten pounds!* We'll probably win anyway! We can't lose. It's throwing money away."

His lips pouted sulkily. "I got it from the best medicine-man on the coast, sir. If I may say so, sir, the price is very reasonable for a strong ju-ju like this."

I groaned, but decided to leave things as they were.

The critical bend on this course was about half a mile before the finish. I stationed myself there, near a loud-speaker through which a wireless net enabled us to follow the race. As predicted, it became a duel between us and the Nigerians; but as the first runners came into my view I saw that they had the advantage. The first man was theirs, the second ours, then a group of three, consisting of one of ours, one of theirs and a man from a third battalion. The leader came round the corner, hugging it closely. Suddenly he seemed to trip: he fell, and remained still. The others swung out to avoid him and passed on. Somebody hurriedly pulled the body from the course and I saw that he was Samuel. Then another group came into view, a Nigerian slightly in the lead of it, also hugging the corner. He also, seeming to trip, fell, and remained still. With this the needle's power seemed exhausted, for there were no further casualties. But the race was ours. Yet I was not happy, for there had been an alarming stiffness in those bodies as they had been carried away. Feeling like an accessory before the fact, I visited the hospital as soon as I could tear myself from the rejoicing, and button-holed a medical acquaintance.

"Those runners," I asked him, "are they all right?"

He looked at me curiously. "Well, yes, they are—now."

"What was wrong with them?"

"Rather an odd thing: they were in catalepsy."

"But what could have caused it?"

"Since you ask me, old boy, I'd say—though I wouldn't tell the B.M.J.—that they probably thought they'd been cursed."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed with false astonishment. "Do you get much of that sort of thing?"

"It's not unknown. Only last month we had a man who swore he was under curse of death—wouldn't eat, wouldn't take interest in anything. He died. We explain it by suggestion." He looked at me speculatively. "Lucky for you those two fell—eh, old boy?"

I laughed hollowly and left him.

I found Samuel waiting anxiously for me.

"Sir, the medicine-man wants his money," he reminded me.

I felt for my cheque-book and put it back hastily: my bank balance was in its usual state. "Oh Lord!" I moaned.

"Surely, the Colonel will pay for it from battalion funds," he suggested.

"Don't be silly. He'll laugh at me."

"I don't think he will, sir."

It seemed I had no choice. But I was nervous when I knocked at the Colonel's office door.

"Come in!" his voice boomed cheerfully. "Ah, Lauder." He greeted me with an expansive smile. "You did a good job with that team—even though we did have a bit of luck at the end."

"Er . . . it's about that luck that I wanted to see you, sir," I said fearfully and blurted out my story.

"M'yes," he said, narrowing his eyes. "Thought there might be something of the sort when I saw those men fall. Jolly good show! Serve those blighters right for trying to put a ju-ju on *us*. Who was the 'doctor'?"

I told him.

"You couldn't have done better. Very powerful man. You want me to pay him?"

I nodded dumbly.

"That's all right. Got a special sub-account for that sort of thing. Invented it myself."

He unlocked his office safe and pulled out a ledger.

"Look," he said, pointing to a column.

Really, I should not have been surprised by that column's heading.

It was entitled 'Ju-Ju Fund.'

VILLAGE HISTORY

BY RALPH ARNOLD

I HAVE no right to call myself a historian, much less an antiquary. I can never remember when the Stone Age ended and the Iron Age began; I have never engaged in a 'dig'; I cannot decipher Anglo-Saxon charters; and I am apt to confuse early Norm., EE, and Perp. features in a church. But I have spent a lot of time and obtained a lot of pleasure trying to find out as much as I can about the people who used to live in our village, about their way of life, and what the parish must have looked like in the not-too-distant past.

Obviously, my sources of information have been those on which anyone trying to do the same thing in any village almost anywhere would rely—the parish records, especially the Church-wardens' Accounts and Vestry Minutes, the Overseers' Books, the Road Surveyors' Records, and the Parish Registers; inscriptions on tombstones and monuments; wills and other legal documents; the published or privately-printed writings of earlier local historians, erudite parsons, diarists, and compilers of guide-books; maps and plans, especially old estate plans and nineteenth-century tithe-redemption maps; pictures and sketches; oral tradition; and personal observation.

Of all these sources of information oral tradition is probably the most fascinating and the most chancy. The best example that I know came from our next-door parish. A landowner there had an old gamekeeper with whom he was accustomed to walk round his rough shoot. This gamekeeper, who had a long white beard and who could neither read nor write, belonged to a family which, as the saying goes, had lived in those parts for ever. In the course of one of their customary rounds they used to pass a small deserted church or chapel, tucked away on the floor of a narrow, steep-banked chalk valley. The story of this isolated chapel, as my friend and neighbour knew it, was this. There had once been a village at this end of the valley, but at the time of the Black Death its entire population had been wiped out, and the chapel was the only building that had survived. At some time in the 1880s, incidentally, a pious Roman Catholic layman had had it re-roofed and had saved it from collapse. One day my neighbour happened to say to his companion that he had often wondered whether, when the village was in existence, there had been a resident priest. "Oh, no," the gamekeeper replied. "There weren't no resident priest.

Monks used to come over from Dean to take the services." "From Dean?" his master said. "What in the world were monks doing at Dean?" Dean is a farmhouse at the other end of the valley. "Why," the gamekeeper replied, "there were plenty of monks at Dean in them times. My old father told me that." My neighbour consulted the local histories he possessed and drew a blank, went to have a look at Dean Farm, found traces of some very old stonework, and was curious enough to ask permission to bring down a knowledgeable friend from London to look at the place. The friend examined the old walls, consulted records, and confirmed the gamekeeper's story. There had certainly been a small college of priests at Dean; and this information must have been handed down, quite casually, from father to son, for more than four hundred years.

I have never had the luck to receive such a dramatic piece of evidence from the past, but I have discovered quite a lot of interesting facts, as well as some astonishing fables, from talking to old people in the village. It is a golden rule that one should never miss opportunities of this kind. People don't live for ever, and often enough someone has said to me, "Pity you didn't have a word with old So-and-So before he went last spring. He knew a lot about them kind of things." And I did have two strokes of good fortune in the way of written but unpublished records. Soon after I had come to live in my present house a very old lady, who was our nearest neighbour, paid a formal call. She was the last surviving member of a Kentish yeoman family that had owned and farmed land in the parish for more than three hundred years. For something to say I told her that the architect we had employed to carry out some alterations had said that in his opinion the house had probably been built in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. "Oh, no," the old lady said. "He is not quite right about that. This house was built by Bonham Hayes in 1771." I immediately sat up and took notice. It is easy enough as a general rule to find out who built great houses, and when, and to whose design. It is far more difficult with small houses; and if my visitor had got her facts right this was another example of a provincial builder using an out-of-date pattern book. "How do you know all this?" I demanded. "Why," she said, "it's in Richard Hayes's diary. Richard Hayes, you see, who kept the diary, was Bonham Hayes's brother. In 1770 he sold Bonham seven acres of land, and Bonham, who was a bachelor, built this house and lived here with his housekeeper, Mary Hills. I was looking at the diary before I came out this afternoon. In February 1770 Richard fenced the brick-earth that Bonham's men were digging in Chamberlayne Hill—that's the wood they call Chamber's Hill now: and in April 1771 he walked up with his brother to watch the men laying the floors."

I defy anyone not to be interested in where the bricks for his house came from, and in the actual year and month when it was built. I plagued the old lady with questions. Who were these Hayes's? Had the diary been published? Where could I get a copy?

Richard Hayes, she told me, had owned Owletts, the biggish late seventeenth-century house in the village that now belongs to the National Trust. He had inherited the house and the land that went with it from his uncle and guardian, Richard Hayes senior. The diarist had lived and farmed at Owletts until his death in 1790. His diary, which covered the years 1760 to 1778, had never been published; in fact, the note-books in which it had been written had been lost. But a subsequent owner of Owletts had taken copious extracts. These extracts had lately been typed, and she had been given a copy which she would gladly lend me.

I found these diary extracts extraordinarily interesting. Unless you are a trained historian it is extremely difficult to get a real 'feel' or a true picture of the past. You learn the dates of Kings and Queens and of battles and ministries, and you learn and probably forget the main outlines of social history. Occasionally a genius like G. M. Trevelyan, in a page or a paragraph, brings a piece of history alive—so that you sense, momentarily, that you know what life in England must have been like for ordinary people in this past century or in that. It is far easier to get a real picture of this sort if you stumble on the day-to-day jottings of a man who, two hundred years ago, lived in a house that you often visit, planned his grounds and planted a chestnut walk that you know almost as well as your own garden, owned and farmed the fields over which you take your dog for walks most week-ends, heard George III. proclaimed King by a man on horseback in your own village street, and bought provisions from the self-same village shop at which you yourself buy cigarettes. When we first came to live in the village the owner of this shop was a direct descendant of the man with whom the diarist and his uncle had dealt in the eighteenth century.

I also found that the parish records meant much more to me in the light of the diary extracts. It is one thing to puzzle over musty difficult-to-read ledgers; it is another and a much better thing when you can link the entries up with a man who, two hundred years ago, was himself one of the church-wardens, and who reluctantly served his stint as an Overseer of the Poor and as one of the Surveyors of the parish roads. Richard Hayes, as his diary shows, coped with the demands of the visiting Archdeacon that the ivy on the church should be cut, let the grazing in the churchyard with the proviso that the sheep should be folded elsewhere on Sundays, and ran into trouble with his neighbours over the amount of the church rate. He struggled with impecunious, ailing and improvident 'strangers' who drifted into the village and expected to be supported, coped with young ladies who gave birth to illegitimate babies in the outhouse of the Ship Inn, and saw to it that the unemployed were set to work, that the sick were looked after, and that the village orphans were fed, clothed and duly bound apprentice to some trade or calling. He grudgingly lent his teams and his men when the parish roads had to be mended, and grumbled because the Earl of Darnley at the Hall was allowed to pay a money composition instead of providing road-menders and road-material in kind. Then again, such confusing matters as 'small' and 'great' tithes begin to mean something when you have a first-hand account of a long drawn-out battle between an actual tithe payer and the absentee vicar of the parish. Had the vicar, who also held the living of Woolwich, any right to receive the 'small' tithes if he never came near our village from year's end to year's end and failed all too often to provide a curate to take the Sunday services? Had he any right to demand a tithe on coppice woodland, seeing that tithe on wood was reckoned as 'great' tithe and rightly belonged to the lay rector? Was he in order in demanding that tithe payments should be made to a nominee in the village? Richard Hayes solved all these problems by witholding his own tithe payments for a couple of years. He then summoned the vicar to come in person to Owletts. The tithe on wood he flatly denied him, and he only handed him the other moneys that were due after the absentee cleric had solemnly promised to make better arrangements for the conduct of the church.

I was lucky in my diarist. Richard Hayes, a bachelor living with an unmarried sister who kept house for him, must have been a delightful man. First, foremost and all the time he was a farmer, belonging to the race of prosperous Kentish yeomen who prided themselves then, as they still do today, on being the best farmers in England, farming some of the best land in the whole country. He was preoccupied, as his diary shows, with the fluctuating price of wheat at the Dartford and Gravesend markets, prices which were dependent on the weather, on wars, and on government interference; with the cultivation and marketing of his hops, still a tricky enough crop to grow but doubly tricky in the eighteenth century before insecticide spraying had been introduced; and with the vagaries, idleness and dishonesty of his farm labourers. This last preoccupation has always puzzled me. Reading between the lines it would seem that Richard Hayes was a just and kindly employer. Did he have so much trouble with his men because most of them were day or piece labourers who were not regularly employed all the year round? Or was this tradition of grudging and unwilling service a carry-over from manorial stints? Or was it due to the labourers' illiteracy and ignorance? There seldom seems to have been a schoolmaster or a school in the village in the eighteenth century, and the great majority of the villagers would have been unable to read or write. Be that as it may, Richard Hayes was interested in a lot of other things besides farming. He was a keen observer of the weather, and of birds and of wild-life generally. He was passionately interested in astronomy. He was fond of flowers and of gardening. He liked shooting and watching cricket-matches; he used to go for long walks with his friend the village butcher; he and his sister paid rare visits to London; and on one never-to-be-repeated occasion he took a trip to France, where he found the food, the people, their manners and their way of life excessively disagreeable. He was thankful to get home again.

In one respect and in one respect only I found the diary extracts disappointing. There were very few references in them to actual farming practice. I mentioned this one evening when I was dining at Owletts, and a few days later my host's younger son brought me a little vellum-bound book with a chased metal clasp. "We've no idea," he told me, "how this came to be in the house"—the Hayes family had died out in 1790—"but it's an old account book and we thought it might be of some use to you."

It was of the greatest possible use. Richard Hayes senior's accounts, covering the years 1736 to 1741, gave me exactly the information I had been looking for. He had farmed the same land as his diarist nephew and heir had farmed after him; and at one end of the book, in a small neat hand oddly like Bernard Shaw's, he had entered every single payment he had made, all his domestic expenditures as well as his out-payments for farming. At the other end he had recorded all the moneys he had received—from rents, the sale of farm produce, and from every other source. I hate figures and accounts as a rule, but I spent many happy days over Uncle Richard Hayes's payments and receipts. I discovered how many men he had employed on the farm and how much he paid them. He had two four-horse teams and employed only five men all the year round—two head ploughmen, two team mates or under-ploughmen (bachelors who lived at Owletts and fed in the kitchen there), and a shepherd. For the rest of his labour force he depended on day-workers, men and women. I discovered exactly what rates had been paid for what jobs. I found out how his hops, cherries, apples, walnuts and cob-nuts were marketed, and how much he got for them after paying commission, tax (on the hops), and carriage, generally by water from Gravesend to London. I found out how much he paid for hop-poles; how much it cost him to plant an acre of coppice wood—a thousand to eleven hundred 'stools' to the acre; and how one year he bought fifty Dorset ewes and fifty Wiltshire ewes at Weyhill Fair, how he had them driven all the long way back to Owletts, and how he eventually disposed of them. Richard Hayes, incidentally, always wrote the word 'sheep' as 'ship,' which bears out Logan Pearsall Smith's contention in his book 'Words and Idioms' that the proverb 'to spoil a ship for a ha'poth of tar' refers to sheep, not ships. In fact, from this little account book I was able to obtain quite a full and satisfactory picture of the practice and economics of eighteenth-century farming in north-west Kent, as well as a pretty good idea of how the Hayes's lived, ate and clothed themselves, and precisely how much it cost them.

Between them, the two Richard Hayes's, uncle and nephew, had dealings with most of their fellow villagers, from the Earl of Darnley at the Hall, with whom the diarist dined in order to discuss a coppice-wood sale, to old Mr Boreyer, the parish mole-catcher; and from the account book and the diary, read in conjunction with the parish records and the inscriptions on the tombstones in the churchyard and on the monuments in the church, I found I could put names and habitations and callings to a surprisingly large number of the village's small population between the years 1740 and 1780. Encouraged, I decided to have a shot at achieving as complete a picture as I could of what the parish had looked like two hundred years ago, what houses there had been then, and what sort of a life the villagers had led.

Scenically, I reached the conclusion that the main difference between the appearance of the parish in 1760 and its appearance today was that in the eighteenth century this particular countryside had been far more enclosed. I came on an elegantly-drawn plan of the Hall estate, dated 1758; and a similar plan of the Owletts farm, produced by the same artist-surveyor in the same year. And from these plans it is clear that whereas today, thanks to the requirements of mechanised farming, there are great stretches of open, unfenced, unhedged arable land, with a pattern made up from the squares and oblongs of different coloured crops, in 1760 these same stretches were divided up by hedges or fences into a maze of little separate fields. The general effect, with plenty of trees in the hedgerows and with wide, weedy and sometimes bush-infested verges in each arable field where the heavy ploughs turned, must have been much greener and fuzzier and prettier than the present scene. Nowadays only the old long-established orchards are hedged. There were differences too, of course. in the crops that would have been grown. There were more hop gardens in the parish in 1760 than there are today; more cherries were grown, but fewer apples. Cob-nuts were extensively cultivated—I know of only two surviving plantations; there would have been no fields of potatoes (it is recorded that in the middle of the eighteenth century only one farmer out of every hundred in Kent grew potatoes as a crop); sanfoin was extensively grown on the chalky land on the parish's south flank; turnips were already grown as a regular crop, as were peas, beans, clover, and trefoil or ray grass. There would have been an occasional field of woad; and as much wheat and as much oats as are grown today, and a lot more barley. In place of present-day wire fences there would have been rough split-wood palings, such as you see in old prints. Each hop 'set' in the hop gardens would have had its own three poles—now most of the gardens are permanently wired. There was rather more woodland in the parish—for the most part coppice woodland—than there is today. No pylons and, of course, no railway in its deep cutting; but, enclosures apart, perhaps the biggest difference of all in the landscape would have been afforded by the roads. In place of the black metalled motor-ways that now run through the parish, even the turnpike road in 1760 would have been little better than a rutted narrow lane, thick with dust in summer and deep in mud in winter, a condition aggravated by overflowing wayside ponds. Ponds are fast disappearing. Soon there will be none left. Richard Hayes was for ever cleaning out or 'mending' his ponds, and the sheep and beasts that were on the move along the roads in those days must indeed have needed them. Whenever I try to picture the parish as it was two hundred years ago I imagine myself walking along what is now the main road running from the village to the railway station. It is hedgeless, treeless, and its banks have been sprayed with weed-killer. In 1760 it would have been a cart-track, with hedges full of wild roses in the summer-time and banks ablaze with poppies and mauve mallow.

Architecturally, I found no difficulty in discovering what the church, the adjoining college or almshouse, the Hall, and Owletts must have looked like two hundred years ago. Owletts I knew all about from the diary and from a contemporary drawing. There are drawings, too, of the church, the college, and the Hall; and as these three buildings were rather celebrated there are plenty of accounts of them written by eighteenth-century visitors, antiquaries and guide-book compilers. Visiting churches and great houses was a popular recreation in those days. They were, of course, very different. The south front of the Hall had not yet been Georgianised; its kitchen court had not yet been built; and Humphry Repton had not yet landscaped its park, removing all but one of its four great seventeenth-century avenues and designing the present carriage-drives on the principle, as he explained, of 'an allowable display of property without ostentation.' I should have loved to see the inside of the church before its extensive 'restoration' by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1860. It would still have had its rood screen, and screens blocking the two side aisles, and box pews, and the gallery for the village orchestra. But I hope I should have been as shocked as the eighteenth-century antiquaries were by the decay and delapidation of its famous monuments. In 1760 the great altar tomb was in ruins, smashed by a fallen roof-beam; and the lattens or brasses had been wrenched from their settings in the choir floor and bundled pell-mell into a great wooden chest. For the rest, it was not difficult to decide which of the farm-houses and which of the cottages that are standing today would have been there two hundred years ago. All the present farm-houses were in fact built before 1760; but very few of the cottages marked on eighteenth-century maps and plans are still there. These thatched, timbered tenements must have been nearing the ends of their useful lives, and in this prosperous farming country-side there was a great pulling down and rebuilding of cottages between 1760 and 1850. And very pleasing many of the replacements are, especially when they followed the Kentish fashion of weatherboarding, but it was a bit sad that changing economic conditions allowed them far smaller gardens. Several of the present-day village's 'prized antiques' were not in existence in 1760. The now crumbling mausoleum in the park of the Hall was built to Wyatt's design in 1790; the groups of oast houses, which are popularly supposed to be of great antiquity, are nineteenth-century replacements of earlier models; the present village pump was not erected until 1848; and the Italianate campanile water-tower in the Hall's home farm is also Victorian. But to balance these comparative newcomers, and the mass of new houses that have sprung up quite lately in the parish, there would have been a few 'objects of interest' in 1760 which have now disappeared—the windmill, for instance, and the Great House at the top of the village street, and the megalith in Battle Street. The megalith must have been remarkable. Round what had once been a long communal burial mound there still stood, in 1760, a ring of tall free-standing sarsen stones. These huge stones were taken down in 1770 on the orders of the third Earl of Darnley. Most of them went to form a 'Druids' Circle' in the pleasure gardens of the Hall, a few of the smaller ones are scattered about the village. The virtual disappearance of the windmill was due to its sweeps falling off and never being replaced; but the Great House presented me with a problem. A large, solid, square red-brick mansion, it had been built, apparently, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. All that is left of it today is its walled forecourt. What had happened to it? I wondered whether it had perished in a disastrous fire. In the end I discovered that the sixth Earl of Darnley had acquired it around 1860 and, disliking the idea of gentry neighbours in such close proximity to the Hall—no more than a mile and a half away—had had it pulled down. A splendid example of Victorian aristocratic exclusiveness.

Socially, just as the Hall with its thirty-six maidservants and its small army of indoor and outdoor men-servants must have been an almost self-sufficing community, and just as the Hayes's brewed their own beer from their own malt and their own hops, baked their own bread with their own flour, and churned their own butter from their own milk (but they bought cheeses, Kentish cheese having a poor reputation), so the village in the eighteenth century was a much more self-contained and self-sufficient community than it is today. Now there is no tailor, no miller, no butcher and no blacksmith in the parish, callings which were all represented in 1760; and two hundred years ago most of the villagers were what we should call small-holders. They all had big gardens, some of them owned a field or two or a share in a field, and most of them grew a few hops which the Hayes's dried for them in their oasts. To eke out a livelihood, these small-holders worked as day and piece labourers on the farms. At busy times of the year there was always an unsatisfied demand for labour—in one single year Richard Hayes senior employed no fewer than twenty-eight different men and six different women, some quite regularly, others only occasionally; but in winter, as the Overseers' Books show, there was some unemployment and consequent distress. Church services on Sundays seem to have played a big part in the village life. When they were in residence at the Hall the third Earl and his Countess always attended with their family and their household, and his lordship had a word or two to say to the curate if the service did not begin sharp on time. The statutory village fair was held each year on 2nd August, attended by the neighbouring gentry in carriages or on horseback; and on the King's Birthday, on Coronation Day, and on Gunpowder-Treason Day the bell-ringers, having rung their peal, walked down to the little village green, which has now been invaded by road widening, and there broached a cask of elder wine, provided by the Vestry. In 1760 there were, as there still are, three public-houses in the village street, and outside two of them there were 'tea-gardens,' presumably for the delectation of visitors. There was a village pound, a village cage, and the original village-pump. Cricket, for so long a feature of this village, may or may not have begun by 1760. The first recorded cricket-match in which a village team took part was played in 1776. For the rest, before the days of County Councils and Rural District Councils, the parish ran its own affairs, levied its own poor-rate and its own church-rate, looked after its own people when they were unable to look after themselves, possessed its own poor-house, and got along probably not too badly under the guidance of such excellent people as the Hayes's and under the nominal supervision of the local Justices of the Peace, gentlemen for the most part living in the nearby cathedral city of Rochester who, as far as I can make out, played very little part in the rule of this small rustic republic.

When you start trying to delve into village history you soon find that it is one of those self-imposed tasks that never come to an end. Indeed I do not want it to end. Every time I go out there is something to look at with an inquiring eye, some question to ask a chance-met village friend or acquaintance, something to look up when I come home. I have taken an interest in trees; and I was delighted to discover that the huge lime-tree in the churchyard was planted by the churchwardens in 1714, and that they planted the yew at the church's south-east corner at the same time. I have also struggled with place-names, field-names, and wood-names. Place-names and the names of houses are great fun, but it is a mistake to try to be too clever about their derivations. There is a house in the parish called Danes' Place. It would be possible, but a mistake, to link the name up with remote invasions. In the eighteenth century this farm belonged to Mr Edmund Daynes. Field-names and wood-names are tricky, because they are apt to be changed by successive owners. A few of the names of fields and woods marked on the 1758 plans are still in use today; a few more are just recognisable—Chamber's Hill for Chamberlayne Hill, Scalers for Scareless, Northgate for Northcott. But on one farm which I investigated, the name of every single field had been radically altered between 1796 and 1810. One of the fields in the parish is called, and was called in 1758, Holy field. It would be a great mistake to imagine that a chapel had once stood in it. There is a reference in Richard Hayes's diary to 'filling up the hole in Holy field.'

If it is known that you take an interest in village history your neighbours are apt to bring you things—objects that they have dug up in their gardens, or papers and documents that they have come across. I can very seldom identify the objects, but not long ago an old lady in the village died and her daughter found among her possessions a copy of the Articles of Agreement of the 'United Service' Benefit Society, of which her father had been a member. I had never heard of this organisation, but it interested me enormously because it turned out to have been a mutual sickness benefit scheme which began operating in the village in 1829. Its membership was confined to persons living within six miles of the Darnley Arms, and if a duly elected and fully paid-up member, through 'sickness or lameness,' found himself unable to work he 'went on the club' and received a weekly benefit from the club funds ranging from ten shillings a week to three shillings a week for chronic invalids or 'pensioners.' A lump sum was paid out on the death of a member or of his wife. When a member was receiving benefit he had to be visited every so often by one of the officers of the club; and members had to attend fellow-members' funerals. The Society also had a strong 'social' side. On the second Mondays in November, February, May and August the members met in their club-room at the Darnley Arms public-house; each member paid in his quarterly subscription of five shillings; officers were elected when necessary; and the business of the Society was most formally transacted. But on these occasions fourpence was deducted from each member's subscription and was spent on beer. Each Whit-Monday the members held a feast. Two shillings were taken from the funds for each member, each member subscribed another two shillings, and these moneys, together with the fines and forfeits that had been collected over the year, were expended on food and drink. The proceedings began with a service in the church, there was a procession with banners and a band through the village, and then came the dinner at the Darnley Arms. Before the introduction of the National Insurance Act, this local democratically-organised and democratically-run scheme must have filled a real need; and it speaks well for the integrity and efficiency of its officers—and for the health of the rural community—that the 'United Service' flourished for about forty years. The Introduction to its Articles begins: 'As brotherly love and charitable friendship are duties in which mankind should strictly join, the members most cheerfully agree to support each other under such calamities which Almighty God may be pleased to inflict us with. . . .' I like the phrase 'most cheerfully.' Attending these quarterly meetings in the club-room at the Darnley Arms and transacting business and drinking beer with your friends must have been a lot gayer than going to the post office each week to buy an insurance stamp.

But it is all too easy to cry down the present and to cry up the past. The National Health scheme, piped water, main drainage, electricity, regular employment, first-rate education, television, and good roads all have their points.

KELSO'S BOMBER

BY J. D. WESTWOOD

I

WHEN Mugra Lennox arrived at my bungalow I was lying awake listening to the breaking of dawn; to the clop of impatient hooves and the answering clatter of feed-buckets, the call of the muezzin over the city, the clanging of an iron conservancy cart, the stamp and snort of a saddled hack waiting beside the porch.

The tea on my bed-table was beginning to cool off when a storm of plunging and vernacular blasphemy heralded the arrival of Mugra's vintage Dodge, a touring model whose price in the years of austerity was above rubies. Mugra must have started early on his forty-mile drive-in.

As he darkened my doorway I called for more tea, and while waiting for it he lowered his six-foot-two of rugged, blue-eyed good nature onto my bed and told me that Kelso, the Commissioner, had required his immediate attendance. He wanted to know what on earth had aroused Kelso, than whom it would have been hard to find anything less dynamic. One recalled how, but a few years back, Kelso had slept soundly through an historic seismic disturbance while his new Studebaker was being entombed in the rubble of his porch.

I could throw no light on the mystery, so Mugra got down to scrambled eggs, and promised to tell me all about it when he returned later.

He hoped it was nothing serious. We were all very fond of Kelso.

II

Mugra and I had little in common beyond a passing interest in horseflesh, but he had a gift of friendship, and there was one thing I never could make out—how he had come to be nicknamed Mugra. The word means sullen and disgruntled, and he was neither. He could look dour at times, but that was nothing more alarming than the physical effort of constructive thought. In examining the problems and grievances of his Indian friends he never made the mistake of drawing tactless distinctions between troubles brought on by misconduct or stupidity and misfortune arising out of some regrettable misunderstanding on the part of providence.

For he knew his Indian. He

could think as the simple cultivator and coolie think—his own logic at times was not unlike the flight of a snipe. Wherefore it was a measure of his standing in an unpredictable community that he was approached not as Lennox Sahib, but as Mugra Sahib. The Indian can be a loyal and stubborn friend; if he likes you little else seems to matter. For which good reason or reasons, doubtless, particularly in wartime, Mugra was regarded by the provincial hierarchy as a gift from heaven—and he did not have to wait till he got there for his reward. He collected it here below. An O.B.E.

Mugra's earliest years had been passed in the loom of the foothills, on inherited family swamps so hard to get at that they were something of a bird sanctuary. Part of the direct approach from the nearest branch line lay through a jungle of twisted trees growing in water, and the best way to get there was on an elephant.

It was an instructive and inspiring introduction to the adventurous business of life. The boy's mind was discerning and receptive, and when his parents considered it had absorbed as much as was good for it, and bundled him off to school in Kent, he found England a poor substitute for his crocodile-infested swamps. In the drowsing lanes of Kent he saw visions and dreamed dreams.

> *'For him the bullfrog sang again,*
> *And fading echoes rang again.'*

Mugra's ancestry was predominantly Irish, which may have had something to do with his facile comradeship and persuasive fluency. Even the unlettered countryman would stand transfixed in reverential delight as Mugra, in by no means unsuggestive terms, recast some unfortunate delinquent's horoscope; for his homely dialect was whetted on the hone of measureless time. Under your eyes he would become one with the cartman roosting like a vulture on the shaft between his bullocks' rumps, and when he snapped his fingers in front of a gaping yawn to keep evil spirits from jumping down his throat, he was the village bunia among his grain-bags, the vendor of sweetmeats stirring his pans on the floor.

In the dark war-years Mugra occupied an old Dutch planter's bungalow, a palatial if somewhat moth-eaten island in a savannah of sugar-cane, a landmark in the crumbling process of planting occupation. As aniline dyes came in, the old-time, terai-hatted indigo-planter faded into a spectral twilight of absentee landlordism, and his estates, or 'concerns,' were entrusted to a succession of managers with sensitive fingers on the agrarian pulse.

Mugra was one of them, unmarried and content with a very pleasant way of life. With a religious respect for tradition, his heart was in the old Dutch barns and indigo vats, and with the raw young animals he schooled into class polo-ponies. Looking out over a sea of cane, he could see and hear one of the many four-hundred-ton sugar mills that had mushroomed in the Himalayan silt. Night and day, from May onwards through the season, it growled hungrily as the crushers swallowed the cane, and endless streams of bullock-carts whined and groaned through drifting dust to the conveyor-belt.

But the secluded verandahs, frowning under their overhang of thatch, and looking towards the splendour of remote snowfields, were unutterably restful. They were forty miles from Divisional headquarters, and a hundred or more from the stolid consequence of the provinical secretariat; a retreat where you might put up your feet in the secure comfort of being out of reach.

III

After seeing Kelso, Mugra came back to breakfast looking as glum as I felt. The war was not going too well at the moment, and I have sometimes wondered whether, had the Japs managed to land in India, the Union Jack might not still be snapping over Viceregal Lodge and the stately roundabouts of New Delhi.

In common with others nearer home, we nursed an agonising sense of frustration, but in one respect at least our small corner had done not too badly. In one way and another the district had managed to fork out the cost of a Spitfire—£15,000—and with unwonted energy Kelso had lost no time in cabling the money home to the Ministry of Aircraft Production.

And having done so he sat back to await results.

He had not long to wait. The grapevine was at work. Hardly had Kelso's cable gone when the Chief Secretary, Maguire, rang up to ask what Kelso thought he was playing at, sending all that money home direct instead of paying it in to the provincial fund.

Kelso was an Etonian, and Maguire, who affected to regard Eton as the prototype of approved schools, had let himself go over the telephone. He accused Kelso of the dastardly sin of credit-hogging, and Kelso, deeply wounded, was reaching for the barbiturates when a cable from the Ministry of Aircraft Production was handed to him.

It was a personal message, no less, and it was signed *Beaverbrook*!

Kelso's drooping tail stiffened with pride and defiance, and there and then he settled down to draft a private message to his friend and *bête noire*, Maguire; and fancying himself as a classicist he encoded the wire in Latin, inviting Maguire, with due deference, to put his censure where the monkey put the nuts. His reason for wiring instead of using the telephone, he explained, was that he and Maguire did not see eye to eye in the matter of Latin pronunciation.

Kelso's Latin probably took a bit of decoding, and must have shaken the secretariat, but seeing that H.E. the Governor also was tainted with the dust of the Playing Fields, Kelso had little to fear from the Maguires of the service. As Mugra put it, they talked the same language. "Not Latin, Charles. Inner circle basic. The patois of the Playing Fields."

At that time none of us knew much about Beaverbrook beyond the fact that he could produce aircraft like rabbits out of a hat, and now Mugra and I were beginning to get a glimpse of how it was done. The personal touch—the unwinking man on the spot!

Mugra, having looked into the matter closely, pointed out that Kelso's cable must have been handed in at the Ministry long after office hours, and the reply had come back on the rap. Not a moment's delay.

"All hours," he said, "must be the same to this Beaverbrook bird."

I suggested secretaries, dedicated young women whose mission it was to keep cabinet ministers awake; but he pointed out that the cable lacked the feminine touch.

"What do *you* know about the feminine touch?" I asked scathingly, and he answered, "You'd be surprised, Charles. The way that cable ended—no beguiling gentleness anywhere. No rapture."

I demanded to know more, and Mugra pulled himself together as if to make an important announcement.

"That wire, Charles—it patted us on the back. Very appreciative, and went on—Charles, are you listening?"

I assured him my ears were flapping, and told him to get on with it.

"All right—that cable ended with the words *Why not make it a bomber?*"

I sat up like a startled marmot, with little joy in the Beaverbrook bird. We of the district were justly proud of our Spitfire, and here we were being asked by this arrogant Beaverbrook if this was the best we could do.

"How much more would it take?" I asked indignantly.

Mugra answered, "Another five thousand."

"And what did Kelso say to that?"

Mugra was unsmilingly amused, and I began to fear he had allowed himself to be dazzled by the Beaverbrook touch.

He answered plaintively, "The poor chap had a worm-riddled volume of Horace's Odes on his blotting-pad. He kept fiddling nervously with it all the time he was speaking. He was running a temperature and had already chewed up two thermometers."

I could well believe it.

"What did he say?" I persisted.

"He cabled back, *Certainly a bomber*."

"The devil he did!"

"As you know, Charles, there's a war-fund gathering and pigstick at the Willoughby factory tomorrow morning. It was got up hurriedly, and at the last moment Kelso was invited to address it. Well, he can't, because he's booked to show up at an investiture in Government House tomorrow. He's to have the Star of India pinned on, and the thought of facing the music has done nothing to bring down his temperature. H.E. can't have heard of the Beaverbrook's sporting suggestion yet, let alone Kelso's reply, and he isn't looking forward to the moment when he does. Neither is he overjoyed at the prospect of forgathering with Maguire."

I could appreciate that. "Maguire's manner is certainly unfortunate," I observed.

"Can't say I'm very fond of him myself," Mugra grunted.

"Not that there's much wrong with him," I insisted, and Mugra came back at me with an old Indian proverb which stresses the fact that the higher the monkey climbs the tree, the more you see of his behind.

"Quite so," I conceded; "but you must admit there's something to be said for his annoyance. And where exactly do *you* come in?"

A troubled look I had noticed earlier came back into his eye. He went on to explain that he had allowed himself to be persuaded to deputise for Kelso.

Now this was an important gathering. It was sponsored by the owner of the Willougby factory, Damodar Singh, a loyal supporter of government with his eye on the Honours List. As Mugra prophesied, the ground would be thick with Rajahs and Rich Men.

"If it is so important," I went on, "why does he not send Jordan or one of his assistant magistrates?"

Mugra had himself put that to Kelso. Jordan, the Deputy Commissioner, was out on a shoot and could not be got at in time, and the young magistrates were excellent fellows, but their dialect was not altogether democratic. High-flown stuff would not go down with the masses, and anyway the only one available was a Madrassi, and in these parts Madrassis were regarded with suspicion as aliens. In any case they were much too astute to be popular.

"So you see, Charles, there was nothing for it but to agree. It would never do to let old Kelso down."

"No. Of course not."

"We've got to do our best."

"Naturally—but why *we*?"

Mugra grinned across the table at me.

"Because you're coming in support, Charles. It can't have escaped your notice that the strain is already telling on me. We have only twenty-four hours in which to think of something to talk about; so mop up your coffee like a good chap. The sooner we get to my place the better. Damodar will mount us for the stick."

IV

On Mugra's verandah that evening we discussed strategy—the high, the middle, and the low. We turned it outside in and round about, and got just nowhere.

An unlooked-for splash of rain had filled the air with an exhilarating smell of wet dust, and opened a view of gleaming remote snows that must have stirred something in the deeper soundings of Mugra's soul, something that England had failed to touch; for when I asked again why Kelso should have pitched on him in particular, he did not seem to hear, but went on talking half to himself, picturing the countless millions toiling in the paddy-fields and soaking the jute—millions upon millions of them, dead to anything that might be happening across the accursed Black Water to people they had never even heard of.

He roused himself at last to inquire rhetorically—"What do *they* hold sacred?"

I could tell him that.

"Any really bloody mess, Mugra. Mai Kali for a safe bet."

He raised his eyebrows in surprise. "The old Destroyer! She has him scared all right; but he's used to that. The poor devil has walked with fear all his life. Security's no more than a pipe dream to him. Nothing really matters but his cattle, his kids, his miserable roof and his ancient ways—especially the ancient ways. To hold anything sacred, you know, there must be love in some form or other, and I can't see any man cherishing what he's scared of. In the jungle, when his lonely stomach turns over, the vermilion-daubed idols are no comfort. At that moment the god in the machine, so to speak, is more like to be . . ."

He hesitated, and I hazarded, "Krishna?"

"The gay lad with the flute? Try something nearer home, Charles. Try our Kelsos—this one in particular."

It was my turn to indulge in a little mild derision. "Kelso the Deliverer! Can you picture him setting to partners with the sanguinary old lady? He'd be horrified if he could hear you."

All the same, when one came to think it over, Kelso fitted the bill like a hermit crab. He had a soft spot for everyone, even Maguire, and he was *persona non grata* with the money-lenders. And he had an endearing but unorthodox trick of getting borderline litigants to toss for it—an economy in time and costs which did not appeal to all schools of thought.

Mugra poured out another peg of Bourbon, Scotch having by this time retired into the recesses of the Black Market. As he did so he mused, "In a world where destroying demons whistle across the night skies, our Kelso stands out like Simon on a monument."

Then again he reminded me we were due for an early start. Thirty miles to go.

"Ten of them through the forest, and we can't rush that—not with tyres worn down to the canvas, and Controllers as costive as the treasury."

V

We got away by starlight after Mugra had prowled round doubtfully kicking his tyres. I have never wearied of the crowded Indian night sky, and the air fresh on one's face. Fields of grain and tobacco and cane sped dimly past, and overhead the night sky raced with us till we slowed down in a starless jungle of tree-trunks. Green eyes and red glowed at us out of the night and vanished, an angry boar fled down the track of the headlights till the klaxon, which Mugra kept for stubborn bullock-carts, tumbled him into the scrub. Then a stag bounded across followed by his entire zenana.

By the time we came into the open again the sun had set fire to the tree-tops, and half an hour later the magnificently-bearded Damodar Singh and his medical brother, on leave from Burmah, made us welcome at the factory.

The assembly was still gathering—in cars, on foot, on horse and elephant-back, and by the time we emerged after a bite of breakfast the assembly had become really impressive. Amir Singh, the doctor, on learning of Kelso and his bomber, had said, "Five thousand? You won't raise that in rupees out of that lot. If you get as much in rupees I'll throw in another thousand myself."

When he came out again and saw the crowd that had come together, he remarked grimly, "It doesn't look too good for that thousand of mine, does it? But it's not in the bag yet."

The crowd was collected on a grassy maidan between the factory wall and railway borrow-pits three hundred yards away. A platform had been knocked together for the speakers, and tables, chairs and benches set out under a striped canopy for Mugra's Rajahs and Rich Men. Along the factory wall empty cane-carts were banked three deep, their teams chewing the leisurely cud beside them. At the tables sat the eminently successful, purse-proud personalities of divers creeds and castes—proud bewhiskered Rajputs and Sikhs; the cunning merchants of Marwar in tight, quoit-like turbans; and astrakhan-topped Muslims, many of whom had been to Mecca. Of the higher-caste Hindus, some were ballooned in fine muslins, those taking part in the pigstick breeched and booted and Bombay-bowlered.

It was a sight to gladden any aspiring mercenary heart. Never since the historic occasion when, as was unreliably reported, trays of Durbar medals were handed round with the betel and cardamoms, had I wallowed so warmly in an aura of substantial well-being. Here in truth was a cross-section of the larded élite, whose bulging satin presentation money-bags rested on the tables before them, surveyed with furtive jealousy by those whose faces stood to be blackened in a plutocratic rat-race. Was not the war fund after all an important, morally compulsory charity commanding the most exalted recognition?

On the cane-trash-covered earth there squatted the unlarded, the labour that buttresses the golden crust—a backbone of husbandmen and retainers; and behind them all a swaying rampart of bored pad elephants, enduring with the patience of eternity.

Mugra was scrutinising the Marwari traders with appraising interest, and well-bred contempt. Lowering his voice suitably he said, "Rich as a Madras curry, but heaven be praised there's little love lost between our lordly master-hucksters. They are ambitious and stiff-necked as Lucifer, and just as treacherous in their vindictive pride."

His gaze shifted, and he added solemnly, "Look what's coming."

A leisurely, consequential group was approaching. Ahead of it, carrying an ivory walking-stick and resting his weight on the arm of a soldierly figure in polo-cords, was a white-robed, frail, and frosty-bearded ancient under a gold-embroidered tarboosh. The younger man, nursing a richly-coloured briar pipe, was his son, Asaf Khan.

Of the importance of this party there could be no question; for the old gentleman's domains stretched from one horizon to another, and, *via* a dozen railway sheds, deluged the Hooghly docks with rice, jute, and linseed. The family had hived from the Nawabs of Oudh, and he never let it be forgotten. He was known as the Chaudhury Sahib and enjoyed a ruinous hereditary privilege, that of entertaining lavishly such Governors and Viceroys as might be pleased to cross his boundaries.

The son's claim to distinction was securely established on polo-ground and racecourse, with the added boast of having, on a memorable occasion at Lords, uprooted Kelso's Etonian stumps for a duck.

The Chaudhury appeared to be looking about him for something he could not see.

"Where is Kelso?" he asked.

The position was explained to him at some length. He listened carefully and looked displeased. Asaf Khan whistled in compassionate concern and dashed the nicotine from his pipestem. "Accident-prone as usual!" he exclaimed. "Something's got to be done about it."

He whispered in the Chaudhury's ear. The old gentleman nodded, turned, and, steadied by a uniformed orderly carrying a long-stemmed hookah, twitched his way on to the rostrum and into the Chair, and no sooner was he comfortably settled than he rapped with his ivory stick for attention and addressed the gathering. In a voice of surprising depth and firmness, and with rather more than a hint of indignation, he described the distressing situation in which their good friend Kelso had found himself.

With ears cocked the assembly hung on his words as, in a fiery spirit of exaltation he told of how, on their behalf, their friend was in trouble with government because he had sent bombers to keep the savage Japanese from ravishing their zenanas, and German dacoits from concealing their diabolical diving-ships in the sacred waters of their beloved Ganges —to emerge by night and lay waste their crops and destroy their homes. Profoundly moved he banged on the floor, and had the orderly not kept a watchful eye on it, the bullioned headdress would have gone for six.

There could not have been a more propitious beginning. The old gentleman had his audience shuffling in the trash. Governments are the universal Aunt Sally, and as the Chaudhury Sahib sank back, Mugra leapt up and took over with the deadly impact of an Aintree announcer.

Our sympathies, of course, were

all with the martyred Kelso. Our loyalties effervesced as Mugra tossed his homely village imagery like sizzling Shrove pancakes. As he twisted the rumps of imaginary oxen between clenched knuckles, his angry listeners were 'agin the government' to a man. A triumph for Mugra—today he was one with themselves, one with the charioteers and toilers who rocked, cross-legged and entranced, on their latter ends. For that moment at least the world about them was theirs, theirs to fight for. The wells delivering water to their thirsting crops were theirs, as were the linseed and mustard oils trickling from the presses, and the chaff that blew from the threshing floors. All these were theirs, and Kelso too. My own thoughts were stimulated and harked back in gratitude and admiration to generations whose ambitions had not run to self-righteous liquidation. For the moment a primitive and no doubt deplorable spirit of loyalty drummed in the throbbing of the mill. Even the Chaudhury fidgeted as Mugra trampled out the vintage.

VI

As the mounting sun drew level with the crown of the factory chimney, a hard glitter came into the shimmering atmosphere, and I may have dozed off, or simply nodded; for as through the blurring of a dream at half-cock I saw an old carter scramble to his feet and lurch forward as though hypnotised—as emotionally he probably was; and if tension was anything to go by, he was not alone in that.

The man wore the tight loin-cloth of the wrestler and was dragging at a tattered brown horse-blanket wrapped about his shoulders. He halted a moment, swaying before the platform while he dragged the blanket clear and rolled it into a ball.

Prepared for God alone knew what, Mugra took a pace back, and the assembly froze in hard silence at the outrageous insolence of it. Half a dozen stout fellows, clutching their heavy male bamboos, were already on their feet and looking for a free-for-all, when the old fellow, his head thrown back in reckless abandon, croaked through the dust of his windpipe, " Mugra Sahib, look you. I am a poor man. This is all I have to offer! "

And with that he flung the blanket at Mugra and the company hummed like an angry hive. Mugra had caught the blanket, and lifting it high above his head, shouted, "*Shabash*, Brother! In the name of God, well done! *Arré*, Janab Log, and High Priests of the Gold Mohur—*what am I offered for this noble gift?*"

And Asaf Khan, beside his hoary old father, removed the pipe from his mouth and called out, "One hundred rupees!"

And hardly was the pipe back in his mouth when a smouldering-eyed Marwari clashed a loaded satin bag down on his table and cried, "*Five* hundred!"

The words shot between his teeth, a challenge and provocation to his kind, and Mugra laughed in derision.

"*Five*, oh lordly protector of the poor? *Five?* Do you not then fear to arouse the laughter of the gods?"

And indeed it almost seemed that the sporting spirits of the mightiest of valhallas were in the ring seats, for a glowering rival was already twisting a defiant moustache. He raised the bidding to a thousand, and in a flash the face-saving war was on, and we were in the big stuff. Smouldering professional jealousies came flapping onto the canvas. Deep was calling to deep and taking soundings. The rich men—the bankers, the usurers, the mill-owning plutocrats of the cotton, rice, and jute pits, rajahs and landowners—their hats were thrown into the ring in a welter of unyielding pride. As the price of prestige soared, so did passions deepen, and starry-eyed workers exclaimed in wonder, delight, and encouragement, in a firmament of extravagant brilliance. Had the elephants lifted up their shrill trunks and bid the earth, no one would have been greatly surprised.

The engagement came to an end through sheer exhaustion, leaving Mugra dazed, incredulous, and happy. When the benevolent eruption was over and the dust had begun to settle, the ordered tribute of satin bags began to come in. Humble copper offerings were accepted as ceremoniously as the lordly cheque; and at the end, as factory accountants totted up, Asaf Khan laid a firm hand on Mugra's shoulder.

"Congratulations, Mugra," he said. "You have surpassed yourself. The Chaudhury would like to know how far you fall short of your target. He's worked up good and proper, and backing Kelso for a win. We are all for getting that bomber into the sky."

"As how?" I asked, and Asaf Khan told us the old man would make up the difference, and Kelso could get on to Beaverbrook again as soon as he liked. Then he waved his pipe at the dirty old blanket on the ground, where it had been dropped, and asked, "What are you going to do with it?"

Mugra picked it up and eyed it with distaste.

"We might return it to the old boy who threw it at me," he suggested, and Asaf Khan grinned at him broadly.

"You can try," he said, and strolled away fumbling for matches.

The Rajahs and Rich Men were on the move now. Mugra called up the old carter who had 'donated' the blanket, and held it out to him, but the old fellow made no move to take it. His face broke up into a web of fine lines. He placed the palms of his hands together humbly in supplication, and implored Mugra to have mercy on him.

"Sahib bahadur," he pleaded. "I am a poor man, and I am not brave. I cannot go back to my village in anything so valuable."

THE LOOKER-ON

WHEN Parliament reassembles towards the end of October, Mr Macmillan's new Government will come face to face with its critics for the first time. It seems unlikely that the respite of three months since the new appointments were announced at the end of the last session will have blunted the sharpness of the criticisms made at the time. Those criticisms were directed both at the personalities concerned in the changes and at the distribution of posts. Both forms of criticism converged upon the Foreign Office appointments as their chief target: upon the choice of Lord Home as Foreign Secretary and the designation of another Foreign Office Minister (Mr Heath, as Lord Privy Seal) to sit also in the Cabinet. But these were not the only points of criticism. The whole rearrangement came under fire, and it is as a whole that it has to be justified.

So far as the Foreign Office is concerned, the two changes of principle, though they can be separated in theory, are obviously connected in practice: for presumably Mr Macmillan would not have contemplated having a second Foreign Office Minister, from the House of Commons, in the Cabinet if the Foreign Secretary himself were also still in the House of Commons. There is no very convincing justification in precedent for either part of the arrangement. There have been Foreign Secretaries in the House of Lords in the present century (Lord Curzon, Lord Reading—very briefly—and Lord Halifax being the most recent examples), and the practice was quite normal in the nineteenth century. But it has generally been a condition of their success that foreign affairs should be outside the range of party controversy. All three peers who held the office in the last fifty years held it in what were at least nominally coalition governments. Lord Home does not; and his appointment has had the unfortunate effect, which might have been foreseen, of making foreign affairs even more contentious between the parties than they were before.

The precedents for having two Foreign Office Ministers in the Cabinet are not, on the face of it, any more encouraging. Lord Robert Cecil and Sir Anthony Eden both occupied the junior position in such a tandem at one stage of their careers; and in both cases the motive of the Prime Minister of the day seems to have been to give to the leading advocate of 'collective security' through international organisation a position of prestige without power, while continuing the traditional foreign policy of power politics through the Foreign Secretary. It seems certain that Mr Macmillan has no similar idea in mind in assigning to Mr Heath a special responsibility for Britain's relations with Europe, which are now in such a tangle of mutual suspicion and misunderstanding. At least it has been emphasised that the overall responsibility for foreign policy is not being divided, as it was for instance in the Coalition Government after the First World War, when Lloyd George transferred Middle Eastern affairs from the Foreign Office under Lord Curzon to the Colonial Office under Winston Churchill. Such expedients are not lightly to be repeated.

The official justification for the new arrangement is that the Foreign Secretary is overburdened. The principal items in his burden are, broadly speaking, the paper-work in the Foreign Office, the conduct of representational and social functions at home, attendance at conferences and other international occasions abroad, and submission to scrutiny and criticism in the House of Commons. The last of these tasks has now been decided to be the most expendable—a decision which has naturally offended the House of Commons. At the same time, however, some relief from all except the first will have been gained by the addition of another Minister of Cabinet rank. It might well be argued that a further step could be usefully taken in the direction of divesting the Foreign Secretary himself of all normal responsibility for travelling overseas. It seems an absurd paradox that the marvels of modern communication should be turned into a means of killing Foreign Secretaries by overstrain and depressing Ambassadors to the level of clerks, instead of enabling both to do their respective jobs more efficiently in their rightful places.

Probably, in any case, the Prime Minister's primary motive in reconstruction was not simply to provide relief for the Foreign Secretary, even if that is an incidental by-product. The intention, it may be surmised from a study of the whole operation, is rather to assert, or to reassert, a particular conception of government. This Macmillan conception, if it may be so-called, rests on two principles, which are closely related.

The first is that policy is indivisible. We can distinguish for convenience between foreign policy, defence policy, colonial policy, economic policy, and so on; but in reality they are all just aspects of policy in the singular. All Cabinet ministers must therefore concern themselves with all aspects of policy. The rigid matching of one man and one clear-cut field of responsibility is out of date; departments of state are no longer watertight compartments. Once this principle is accepted, there is no logical reason why one minister should not have a say in the responsibilities of two or three different departments in the Cabinet, and *vice versa*. To a considerable extent this has already happened: the President of the Board of Trade, for instance, *must* overlap both the Foreign Office and the Treasury in his sphere of interest; and the Foreign Secretary cannot ignore the Commonwealth and Colonies as being outside his field of vision.

But the orderly conduct of overlapping interests is only possible if the Cabinet works as a well-knit team; and this is the Prime Minister's second principle. He is a devoted believer in co-operation rather than subordination, and above all in personal loyalty. Nor does he see himself as a Commander-in-Chief, but rather as the conductor of an orchestra. That is why his instinct is to conciliate opposition among his colleagues rather than to crush it: witness his decision to bring back such 'rebels' as Mr Thorneycroft into the Government now, just as he brought both 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' Conservative rebels over Suez into his original government in 1957. And as he respects the rebel conscience, so too he admires loyalty. Personal loyalty certainly plays some part in the increasing trust which he continues to place in both Lord Home and Mr Selwyn Lloyd. All this amounts to a reassertion of the 'collective leadership' of the Cabinet as a balanced team of equals. It is a characteristically traditional conception of Mr Macmillan's; but that is not to say that it is out of date.

The trade-cycle, that untamed bogey of pre-war years, has given place since the war to a new affliction on the British economy, which is the biennial crisis in the balance of payments. In other words, approximately once in every two years—in fact, in the late summer or autumn of nearly every odd-numbered year since the war—the level of our imports outruns the level of our exports to the point where we are in danger of being unable to pay our way in the world. It happened in 1947, when we had to suspend the dollar convertibility of sterling; in 1949, when we devalued the pound; in 1951, when the newly elected Conservative Government raised Bank Rate for the first time since the war; in 1955, when the crisis was met by an autumn Budget; and in 1957, when Bank Rate was raised to 7 per cent. The only exceptions in the cycle were 1953 and 1959. But there is nothing sacrosanct about the two-yearly interval, and in the summer of 1960 there were some anxious speculations whether the crisis might not come this year instead.

There is no difficulty about diagnosing the trouble, or even explaining the two-yearly frequency. The trouble is that we live on a small overcrowded island which cannot grow enough food for more than half our population, and which contains practically no important industrial raw materials except coal. Therefore we have to import or starve; and therefore we have to export a large proportion of our manufactures in order to pay for our imports. But for obvious reasons the raw materials have to be imported quite a time before the corresponding manufactures are exported. And when we are prosperous there is a strong temptation to consume the manufactures at home on a scale larger than our balance of payments can justify. Then the whole process gets out of phase, and the payments fail to balance. The Government has to take more or less drastic measures to cut down consumption at home, and these take roughly a year to work their way through the economic system into full effect. Once they have taken effect, we heave a sigh of relief and relax again, as before. Relaxation, like restriction, also takes about a year to produce its full effect. So, two years after the last crisis, we move into the next one.

The only possible remedy for the process is to export more, as the Prime Minister has lately pointed out for the umpteenth time since the war. Some of the ways of encouraging, or compelling, British industry to export more can be very painful. They involve, for instance, cutting back consumption at home, which may mean actual bankruptcy and unemployment in industries which work only for the home market. The raising of Bank Rate is one of the most effective ways of bringing this about: so it was that 1951 and 1957, the two years when Bank Rate was used as the major weapon against the crisis, were the two occasions when the crisis did not recur again exactly two years later. But although a stiff Bank Rate has the effect, which is healthy in the long run, of driving the inefficient and wasteful producer out of business, it also has the short-term effect of making the level of unemployment look high and the level of production look low. That is what happened in 1959, as the Labour Party forcefully pointed out in the General Election. It says much for the instinctive good sense of the British electorate that they realised that these temporary setbacks were symptoms of a fundamentally sound economy.

But is there no permanent cure? What is required is that British industry should want to trade overseas as a matter of course, just as much as, if not slightly more than, to trade at home. The incentive to do so should be, as it were, built into the economic atmosphere, instead of having to be artificially stimulated by periodic crises. The Prime Minister tried, in his speeches on the subject during the summer, to persuade British industrialists that overseas markets were a pleasure to enjoy, rather than a necessity to endure. "Exporting is fun," he assured them; and he invented the Anglo-Teutonic neologism *Exportfreudigkeit* to rub in his point. But the reaction of the business community as a whole has shown that Mr Macmillan's whimsical humour is not always appreciated. Letters to 'The Times,' articles in 'The Director' and elsewhere have argued that businessmen are not in business for fun. Very few of them can see from their own immediate experience the connection between imports and exports, because they do not even necessarily export their manufactures to the countries from which other industrialists import their raw materials. What they do see under their own noses is the strength and profitability of the home market, and the importance of maintaining it.

They are quite right in emphasising the importance of the home market, and the Government is right in insisting on the export trade. Ideally what is needed is to reinforce the connection between the two, even to the extent of merging them into each other. That is what the United States of America have done for over a century, and the six European countries of the Common Market are trying to do today. Given a very large domestic market, with a common currency, no tariff barriers, and hundreds of millions of customers, you do not have to worry too much about your export trade beyond its frontiers; and your exports may, incidentally, expand as well, as the Six are now showing. Admittedly, even the Americans have recently developed a balance of payments problem, but that is mainly because of their quixotic generosity in giving away foreign aid. It is also partly because no country in the world can be self-sufficient in every kind of raw material today, not even the U.S.A., still less Western Europe. But members of large economic units are certainly going to have less trouble with their balance of payments from now on than members of small ones. Britain cannot stand alone in the modern world. Traditionally, the choice lies between the Commonwealth and Europe; but it is doubtful whether the Commonwealth is any longer an economic unit at all. Though the obstacles to joining Europe are formidable, it looks more and more as if a way of overcoming them must be found.

The 'wind of change,' about which Mr Macmillan spoke in Cape Town last February, has now swept decisively through three-quarters of the African continent. Independence has reached almost all the territories in which it was possible to hand over power to an African population, uncomplicated by settled minorities of other races. The remaining quarter of the continent consists of states in which considerable numbers of Europeans (and in some cases Asians too) have also made their permanent homes, often for several generations. It is much harder to work out a formula of independence for these states, but already the 'wind of change' is blowing gustily round their doors. The British Government has a special responsibility to the Europeans in those territories that are still under British sovereignty, particularly because in some of them people from this country were once encouraged to settle by the British authorities.

The territory most recently affected by the new wind is the Central African Federation. Early last year the danger-point was in Nyasaland, where a state of emergency was declared and many of the African Nationalist leaders, including Dr Hastings Banda, were arrested. So quickly has the atmosphere changed that in August this year Dr Banda was not only a free man again, but led the African delegation at the Nyasaland constitutional conference in London. Meanwhile violence had broken out in both the other two components of the Federation, Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Once again a change of atmosphere came with extraordinary rapidity. By the end of August, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Sir Edgar Whitehead, had announced that negotiations would begin 'as a matter of urgency' to create a much enlarged Southern Rhodesian parliament, with African representation for the first time.

In each case the speed of developments was dictated by the approach of the general constitutional conference on the future of the Central

African Federation, to which Lord Monckton's Commission was appointed last year as a preliminary investigating and advisory body. At the beginning of 1960 it was clear that the main issue at the constitutional conference was going to be whether the Federation (which was established in 1953) should continue at all, or should be dissolved into its component parts, which might then find other kinds of association. The British Government appeared to be committed to maintaining the Federation, the Labour Party and most African leaders to dissolving it. Dr Banda's main ground for opposing the Federation was his fear that Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, both relatively undeveloped African territories, would be dominated by the Europeans of Southern Rhodesia. The British Government's problem has been to convince the Africans that the undoubted economic benefits of federation should outweigh such fears.

Mr Macleod, the Colonial Secretary, has gone a long way towards convincing Dr Banda of British good faith, by conceding to Nyasaland a constitution which provides for African ministers and an African elected majority in the Legislative Council. Sir Edgar Whitehead is clearly aiming at allaying the same fears of white domination in Southern Rhodesia, and hence in the Federation as a whole. In this way Federation may be made more acceptable to Africans, though the attempt has begun late in the day. But it may also become less acceptable to the Europeans of Southern Rhodesia, some of whom have lately been arguing that their only chance lies in secession from the Federation and the maintenance of a compact 'white African' state, such as some South Africans talk of as the ultimate goal of *apartheid*. Sir Edgar ominously warned the Southern Rhodesian parliament that "I will not anticipate that the Monckton Commission report will be entirely welcome and acclaimed by this House." He was surely right.

The 'wind of change' is indeed a threat to those Europeans settled in Africa who cannot accept the idea of living under predominantly African government. Group-Captain Briggs, the leader of the European right wing in Kenya, said of the new constitution for Kenya earlier this year that it was the 'death-knell' of the Europeans in that country; and for those for whom he spoke, that is only too true. A multi-racial state in Africa must in the long run be politically dominated by the most numerous race, which is everywhere African. In such communities the principle of one man, one vote cannot be indefinitely withheld, though it must be approached carefully and is not yet applied even in the new constitutions of Kenya and Nyasaland. This is the direction in which the 'wind of change' is blowing, and it can hardly now be reversed. There remain only two major exceptions: the tragic case of South Africa, and the Portuguese dependencies of Angola and Mozambique. It is a grave question how long they will be able to stand apart.

Until the lamentable murder of the

Prime Minister of Jordan, the Middle East had been almost preternaturally calm for two years; so calm that even the mildest breeze could noticeably ruffle the surface. In the turmoil of 1958, or again since the assassination in Amman, few people would even have noticed the recent statement by the Shah of Iran, in answer to a journalist's question, that his country does indeed recognise the state of Israel, and has done so for many years, in spite of having withdrawn her diplomatic representative for budgetary and other reasons. This correct and harmless statement was enough to lead President Nasser to break off diplomatic relations with Iran, and draw protests also from the governments of Iraq and Jordan. Such is the strength of feeling among the Arab countries against the smallest token of good-will displayed towards Israel.

The Persians, not being Arabs, have never shared this pathological hostility towards the Jews. On the contrary, the relations of the two peoples have been friendly for as far back as recorded history goes: neither of them has ever forgotten that it was Cyrus the Persian who released the Jews from the Captivity of Babylon and allowed them to return to rebuild Jerusalem. Today the Persians are helping the Israelis to survive by supplying them with oil, which can be done from the Persian Gulf to the port of Eilat without having to risk the Egyptian blockade by attempting the passage of the Suez Canal. That, rather than mere diplomatic recognition, is the offence for which President Nasser cannot forgive the Shah's government.

The wider significance of this small episode lies in its illustration of the sad but simple principle that it is always easy to be friends with anyone but your next-door neighbour. Jordan, which is literally surrounded by hostile neighbours—one of which almost certainly inspired the assassination of the Prime Minister—is only the most unfortunate victim of the principle. If you go round the Middle East asking the intelligent man in the street everywhere which country he looks upon as the greatest menace to the security of his own country, the chances are that he would invariably name one of his national neighbours. An Israeli would name one of the Arabic-speaking states adjoining Israel: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia or Egypt; and most of them would name Israel in their turn. On the other hand, those Arab states which do not lie so close to Israel—Libya, for instance, or Iraq, show a much less active animosity towards the Jews, and are more preoccupied with the threat from their own neighbours. The same principle lies at the root of the fact that so few Middle Eastern countries take seriously the threat from the Soviet Union. Turkey and Iran, the only Middle Eastern powers that have a common frontier with the Soviet Union, are the mainstays of the Central Treaty Organisation (formerly the Baghdad Pact). But no Arab country shares that exposed geographical position; and the only Arab country that ever joined the

Baghdad Pact (Iraq) has long since withdrawn from it.

The principle of bad neighbours, as it might be called, has another implication for the Middle East which is important in the long run. No adjustment of frontiers, within reason, can alter the fact that neighbours will still be neighbours. So it would be wildly over-optimistic to imagine that any of the fundamental problems of the Middle East can be solved merely by rearranging frontiers here and there to suit ethnic, religious or linguistic affinities. It never worked in Europe: how should it work in the Middle East? The frontier between Iran on the one hand and Russia, Turkey, and now Iraq on the other, has been disputed since before the First World War; and however it is adjusted, it is always likely to be disputed. Between Israel and her neighbours, by contrast, the dispute is not about the demarcation of the frontier but about the very existence of Israel. No compromise is ever going to settle such problems. We can perhaps mitigate them a little from time to time; but fundamentally, the world, and even the Middle East, must just learn to live with them.

Although nobody yet knows who the next President of the United States will be, a certain number of interesting things are already known about him in any case. He will be decidedly young, as Presidents go, both Nixon and Kennedy being well under fifty—three or four presidential terms younger than President Eisenhower, for instance, when he first took office. Whichever he is, he will have had a good record of active service in the Second World War. He will also have been brought up in one of the important minority religious faiths of the U.S.A., and one which many people would have argued could never produce a President: either the Roman Catholics (Kennedy) or the Society of Friends (Nixon). He will also be a man whose administrative record will be eyed by a good many Americans with anxious scepticism, either because there is too little on it or because there is too much of the wrong kind.

Richard Nixon is the known quantity, who seems to be distrusted even more than the unknown. He is a professional politician who has made many enemies in his meteoric and relatively short career, and few friends; but among the staunchest friends today must be counted President Eisenhower himself, which is more than could have been said eight years ago when they first ran for election together. The enemies are for the time being still the most vocal. They include not only political opponents but many of his fellow-Republicans; and not only the supporters of the Republican Governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller, but even many of the most influential Republicans of his home state, California. The suspicion and hostility which his career has provoked have been given expression, just in time for the election, by an American journalist, William Costello, in what he calls 'a candid biography' (the adjective being printed in capitals on the dust-cover).[1]

The portrait of the Republican candidate and Vice-President is undeniably and intentionally unattractive. At every stage of his career there is a suggestion that his motives and conduct were not quite straightforward. Even on the occasion of his first election to the House of Representatives, to which he came almost straight from demobilisation out of the Navy, Nixon's biographer implies that his principal qualification was pliability unaccompanied by any positive policies.

But according to Mr Costello, if there has always been doubt about what he stands for, there has never been any about the vigour with which he has stood for it. With the negative exception of anti-Communism and the positive exception of foreign aid (which Nixon consistently supported), Mr Costello asserts that 'he has never been identified with any major cause,' and it has been impossible to say which side he really favoured. On the other hand, he has always been a ruthless antagonist, and generally a successful one, in any battle of personalities: witness his contribution to the conviction for perjury of Alger Hiss in 1948, which first made him a national figure; or his vitriolic campaign for election to the Senate in 1950 against Mrs Helen Douglas, with the constant insinuation that she was a Communist sympathiser.

In both those last two cases, Nixon chose Communism as the issue on which to fight. The choice brought him close to the notorious Senator Joe McCarthy, whose crusade against Communist penetration of the U.S. administration also began in 1950. Nixon successfully steered clear of the downfall of McCarthy in 1954, when President Eisenhower denounced 'McCarthyism' and the Senate passed a vote of censure on the Senator himself. But Nixon still regarded anti-Communism as a valid issue, provided that it were skilfully handled. Mr Costello quotes him as saying that 'McCarthy's intentions were right, but his tactics were, frankly, so inept at times that he probably did our cause more harm than good.' He continued to attack the 'Communist conspiracy' in the Congressional election of 1954, with the implication that the Democratic Party was 'soft' towards it, if not implicated in it. But the outcome of the election was a severe setback for the Republicans, and in the corresponding election four years later Nixon campaigned on what was called 'a high level,' with scarcely a mention of treason.

Yet even in 1958 the Republican Party was again routed in the mid-term Congressional elections, two years after President Eisenhower's triumphant re-election. The inescapable conclusion was that only the President's personal popularity could keep the Republicans in office; and their problem in 1960 has been how to transfer the President's aura to his very different deputy and would-be successor. All the Vice-President's critics agree that his greatest virtue is his tenacity; and most of them agree that his political weakness is the reputation of being 'impossible to elect.' 'Unelectability' is a quality more marked and understood in American politics than British, though the Labour Party may be beginning to understand it to their cost in their present leader. It was the stigma that deprived Senator Taft of the Republican nomination in 1952. Yet it was also believed, wrongly as it turned out, to cling to President Truman in 1948. Dangerous though it is for a Briton to speculate about the American political system, it may well be that Truman provides a precedent for Nixon, in more ways than one.

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[1] 'The Facts About Nixon.' (Hutchinson, 25s.)

Like Truman, Nixon made his own way in the world from humble origins; and the Americans generally prefer their Presidents to come, at least metaphorically, from a log-cabin rather than to be born to millions, like Kennedy or Rockefeller. Like Truman, Nixon became Vice-President not so much because of his own intrinsic qualities as because he happened to fit a particular, odd-shaped gap in the jigsaw of his party's programme. Like Truman, too, he grew undeniably in stature with responsibility, beyond the expectations of either friends or enemies. The fact is that, however bizarre, irrational and fortuitous the American electoral system may look to foreigners, it very seldom produces a bad President in the final outcome. And there is one more thing that can probably be said in advance about the next President of the U.S.A.: whichever he may be, America's allies are likely to have nothing to regret about the choice.

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE

Blackwood's Magazine is published by William Blackwood & Sons Ltd. from their Head Office at 45 George Street, Edinburgh 2, and from their London Office at Buckingham House, Buckingham Street, The Adelphi, London, W.C.2.

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Subscribers both at home and abroad can have the Magazine sent by post monthly from the Head Office for £1, 15s. yearly (postage included). The Magazine is registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post.

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